E.M. Forster's *Howards End:* Blurring social classes in a changing society

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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract

E.M. Forsters *Howards End* (1910) publicerades under en tid av sociala konflikter och global oro. Forster var medveten om att drivande krafter hotade de engelska traditionerna som präglade den viktorianska levnadsstilen. Under hela sin karriär som författare och kritiker försökte Forster belysa de sociala konflikterna i det engelska samhället. Denna studie fokuserar på de socialhistoriska förhållandena som skildras i *Howards End*, samt hur Forsters egna politiska och sociala uppfattning konstruerar den kritiska världsbilden i romanen.

Lionel Trillings studie om Forster och hans litterära karriär som en betydande författare inom modernismen utgår från ett socialhistoriskt perspektiv som är grundläggande för denna studie. Trilling utvecklar den moraliska liberalism som karakteriserar Forsters världsbild. Utgående från Trillings bok kan man förstå hur Forster använder liberalismen och symbolism som utgångspunkt för att förstå och jämföra världsbilden i *Howards End.* Den viktorianska romanen och de förändrade samhällsidealen behöver definieras för att förstå de underliggande skillnaderna i de olika värdena som Forster avbildar. Daniel Schwarz och David Medalie, som båda studerar tidiga 1900-talets romanen, lägger grunden för att förstå bakgrunden för den förändrade litterära stilen som bör anpassas till modernismens tid.

De tre familjerna (de traditionella Wilcox, de liberala Schlegels och den lägsta i medelklassen, tjänstemannen Leonard Bast med sin fru Jacky) i *Howards End* representerar olika värden som dominerar den engelska medelklassen i England. Familjerna representerar förhållandena i England och det grundläggande temat i boken är ”Vem ska ärva England?”. Symboliken mellan England och vem som ärver huset Howards End är tydlig. Slutligen kommer Howards End ärvas av Helens och Leonards klasslösa son. Forster konstruerar ett slut där hela medelklassen lever i harmoni. Forsters egna liberala tankar och inflytanden är tydliga i romanen och genom den liberala Margaret Schlegel (senare Wilcox) försöker Forster finna en balans mellan det gamla och nya England. Forster skapar ett slut som pekar på framtida möjligheter men håller sig kritisk till att det är slutgiltigt.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords

E.M. Forster, 1900-talets modernism, brittisk socialhistoria

Muita tietoja – Övriga uppgifter – Additional information

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E.M. Forster's *Howards End:* Blurring social classes in a changing England

1. Introduction

At the beginning of the twentieth century, industrialisation and urbanisation were signs of a changing culture, and global tensions between countries and its people caused anguish and uncertainty. Edward Morgan (E.M.) Forster (1879-1970) lived during these turbulent times and recognised the perturbation of the English people. Forster was brought up when Victorian values were still cherished and dominated the public view, even as modern values started to permeate the mindset of the English. These tensions between old and new values and forces are what characterises Forster's works throughout his career. Forster and his contemporaries, such as Joseph Conrad, D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf, are seminal writers for the state of England at the beginning of the twentieth century. Their writings are reflections of their experiences and observations of the changing world and society. These reflections and perceptions of social conditions are typical of what Daniel Schwarz characterises as the early twentieth-century novel (116). *Howards End* (1910) encapsulates these tensions and depicts the confusion and struggle of the English middle class. The aim of this study is to recognise and study how Forster perceived England and how he attempts to understand and contrast the conflicting views within the class hierarchy in *Howards End.*

During the reign of Edward VII, also known as the Edwardian era, England and the English people were faced with internal and external forces that threatened the way of life as they knew it. That is, their social superstructure was undergoing challenges and changes as the lines between the classes started to blur and new values and ideas contradicted the old. The novel of the Edwardian era is characterised by subjective writing and the structure of the Edwardian novel is usually a continuous process in which values are presented and tested rather than explained. The values can be preserved or disregarded, but the main aspect is that values are constantly put to test and personalised. Daniel Born explains the Edwardian era as a period of transition from traditional Victorian ideals to modern ones, thus marking the beginning of modernism, with new values, ideals and social and cultural movements (141). Essentially, the Edwardian era is the transitional period of England's inexorable transformation from a Victorian society into a modern one and the literature of the Edwardian era mirrors that slow transition. Therefore, Forster's novel (and his other works) is a quintessential work to study the English middle class and society that balance between two world views.

In his novels, Forster evaluates both the Edwardian novel and the Victorian novel. His novels, apart from *A Passage to India* (1924), are all written during the Edwardian era and depict the challenges of the English people. Samuel Hynes describes Forster as an Edwardian writer:

> Forster's novels are Edwardian, not in terms of publication dates alone, but in their atmosphere and in their values; they speak from that curious decade between the death of Victoria and the First World War, a time as remote from our present as the reign of William and Mary, and a good deal more remote than Victoria's age. If we look at Forster's career as an Edwardian one we will, I think, understand much about the novels. (104)

Forster recognised that the changing society was in a state of flux and English life was faced with instability and global forces (such as the Industrial Revolution and urbanisation): "It really *is* a new civilisation. I have been born at the end of the age of peace and can't help but feel anything but despair" (qtd in Furbank 161, emphasis original). His characters are flawed, ordinary and truthful and his stories revolve around tolerance, sympathy, personal relationships and pleasure during a period of uncertainty. Forster's interest in the condition of society is reflected in his characters in *Howards* End, where he delineates and contrasts different classes of society and connects them with a broader vision.

Forster's writing is in the style of the Edwardian modernist with Victorian influences. Schwarz argues that Forster is a seminal writer for the modernist tradition, as he plays with both the Victorian tradition and modernism, and in doing so highlights the process of changes in literary traditions of his time (116). It is worth looking into these two traditions that are depicted in the novel in order to understand the interpretations and characterisations of the early twentieth century. In fact, *Howards End* is an exemplary novel to study the modernist condition in England in the early 1900s. This study is a close reading of *Howards End* from a socio-historical perspective with a focus on the condition of England that is mirrored in the class representations of the three families in the novel. I also pay attention to Forster's literary style as well as his interpretation of society that characterises the turbulent period of the Edwardian era.

1.1. Life of E.M. Forster and *Howards End*

In this chapter I present a short biography of Forster and a short synopsis of *Howards End.* Forster's upbringing and education are what defined him as a liberal and cosmopolitan, with a unique understanding of the world. Therefore, a brief biography of the author helps to conceptualise the beliefs and values that Forster held and ultimately how these views are presented and reflected in his works. Philip Furbank's biography on Forster's life gives a detailed account of his literary career and an outlook on his upbringing. Furthermore, I explain the importance of studying social history and the significance class has in understanding social structures.

E.M. Forster was born in 1879 into a middle-class family. His father Edward Morgan Llewellyn Forster died a year after he was born, and he was brought up by his mother Alice "Lily" and other close female relatives. When Forster was young, he lived with his mother in a house in Hertfordshire, which would become the inspiration for the house in *Howards End.* Lily's liberal and independent lifestyle and world view imprinted on Forster and he learned from a young age to be sympathetic and open-minded. As a young boy, Forster showed interest in books and since they were financially well off his mother hired tutors to educate him. When eleven years old, he started prep school in Kent House, in Eastbourne. He enjoyed the intellectual stimulation but found it difficult to get along with his schoolmates. His early school years were tumultuous, but his love for literature and education persisted. He enrolled at King's College Cambridge, where his love for classics and literature flourished and he found a community where he could have intellectual discussions with like-minded people (Furbank 1-32). In Cambridge Forster started thinking about writing professionally and with the inspiration and support from his contemporaries he was able to pursue that career. Some of his most famous works are *Where Angels Fear to Thread* (1905), *The Longest Journey* (1907), *A Room with A View* (1908) and *A Passage to India* (1924). Another influential work of Forster's is the posthumously published novel *Maurice* (1971), which deals with homosexuality and is inspired by real-life encounters and relationships.

Forster is one of the founding members of the Bloomsbury Group. It was a group of London intellectuals, writers and artists, including Leonard and Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Stephen, Sydney Saxon-Turner and Duncan Grant. The Bloomsbury Group consisted of a group of friends who gathered to discuss different cultural and social conditions. The group started in Cambridge where Forster, together with Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf and Maynard Keynes, gathered to discuss art, philosophy and politics. The members shared

contempt towards Victorian values: they discussed politics and culture and they were influential in their thoughts on literary theory, postimpressionist art and aesthetic theory (Berman). Forster wrote *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), a collection of literary criticism, as well as *Abinger Harvest* (1936) and *Two Cheers for Democracy* (1951) that are comprised of essays. The values and thinking of the members characterise the modern and liberal society of the early twentieth-century England and influenced Forster, both as an individual and as author and critic.

Howards End focuses on three families in turn of the twentieth-century England: The Wilcoxes, a rich capitalistic family, the Schlegels, liberal half German siblings, and the Basts, an impoverished lower-class couple. The Wilcoxes and Schlegels had previously met in Germany on a trip, and Helen Schlegel, the middle Schlegel sibling, befriends the family and visits them at their country house, Howards End. Helen and the youngest Wilcox son, Paul, are engaged, but the engagement is quickly annulled by the Wilcox family, which creates tension between the two families. When the Wilcoxes move to London, close to where the Schlegel siblings Margaret, Helen and Tibby live, the oldest Schlegel sister Margaret befriends Ruth, the Wilcox matriarch. Ruth Wilcox has inherited Howards End and has a deep sentimental connection to it. As she finds a kindred spirit in Margaret, Ruth Wilcox decides to give Howards End to her. Ruth Wilcox is ill and dies early in the novel. The widowed Henry Wilcox receives the note his wife has written as to her wishes concerning the ownership of the country house. Together with his children, Charles, Edie and Paul, Henry Wilcox decides to burn the note and not tell Margaret of Ruth Wilcox's intentions.

As time goes by, Henry Wilcox and Margaret meet and become friends, which quickly turns into romance and marriage. Henry Wilcox's children object but are mostly afraid of Margaret finding out about her intended heritance and claiming Howards End. The Schlegel family are acquainted with Leonard Bast, and Helen and Margaret wish to help Leonard in his financial difficulties. In these efforts, Helen and Margaret explain to Leonard that a wealthy person (Henry Wilcox) has suggested that he make a change in employment due to the future failure of the business. As this does not happen and Leonard leaves the post as he was advised, Leonard struggles to provide for him and his wife Jacky. Helen becomes more anxious to help him and his wife. Helen's dislike of Henry and efforts to help Leonard causes a rift between her and her sister Margaret. The novel continues with several interactions between the three families and ends in Helen getting pregnant with Leonard's child, Charles murdering Leonard and ending up in prison and Henry Wilcox, Margaret,

Helen and Helen's newborn child living together in Howards End. Howards End is to be inherited by Margaret, after which the child is to inherit it.

The societal changes portrayed in the novel come across through the blurring of social classes. Selina Todd has argued that social classes are crucial when trying to understand twentieth-century Britain and provides a key framework for the study of the novel (489). She claims that class is "a frame through which to understand power, continuity and change" (489). A historical approach to understanding class gives insight into the power structure that is so dominant in early twentieth-century Britain. Todd recognises the effort of historians who have studied social structures: historians study how change occurs and how it shapes society that we know today. Todd establishes the historical significance of understanding social structures:

> Far from destabilizing earlier understandings of power, these historians have provided more nuanced analyses of how class intersected with generational and gendered relationships. Their work testifies to the endurance of classed, gendered and generational relations across the twentieth century. (492)

Depending on their upbringing, class and personality, individuals have different ways of coming to terms with change and responding to change. What social historians focus on is how individuals respond to the world around them and how they respond to new relationships and situations. This study focuses on the historical condition of the English through the lives of the three families and how their views are related to Forster's view to "only connect" England and its people. "Only connect" is the epigraph of the novel and indicates a clear theme of the novel. However, the novel is restricted to understanding the English within the middle class and the values and ideals that separate them from each other. According to Lionel Trilling, class needs to be represented through struggles and contradictions in order to be critically questioned (18-19, cf. Widdowson 64). Thus, three families with different backgrounds enable the narrative to highlight the complex relationships and encounters within the historical society that Forster knew.

1.2. Modernism, liberalism and moral realism

Forster's novels examine class difference and hypocrisy in Edwardian England. The novels are quintessentially modernist, liberal and humanist. These concepts need to be defined in order to understand Forster's writing and the historical significance of these terms

that characterise Edwardian literature. The Victorian novel is characterised by its romantic literary style, whereas the modernist novel questions romanticism and what can in retrospect be viewed as moral simplicity. However, the change from the romantic Victorian novel to the modernist Edwardian novel was a slow and gradual process. Forster, whose works have both Victorian and modernist features and themes, can be viewed as both a Victorian and modernist writer and he is a quintessential author of his time whose works represent the shift in traditions. Therefore, it is important to define both literary traditions and present a brief overview of the transition from the romantic literary style into the modernist twentieth-century novel.

During the reign of Queen Victoria and King Edward, stark changes in society and culture and global drifts caused confusion and instability in society and the world at large. This was a time of new inventions, political resistance and possibility and the literary scene was no different: literature changed so that its general theme became questioning the meaning of life and the state of the world as we know it. William York Tindall recognises this change in the Victorian novel when symbolism and naturalism paved its way into British literature (vii). Romanticism continued to be popular in nineteenth-century literature as is evident in the popularity of William Wordsworth and Thomas Hardy, whose works influenced writers for decades to come. Tindall defines romanticism as "the transcendental, the exploratory, and the bourgeois" that also defines the English middle class during the nineteenth century (viii). The Victorian novel looks for the divine in individual experiences in which any disagreements and difficulties are resolved.

Louis James discusses the difficulty in defining the Victorian period and novel, as it encompasses more than half a century during Queen Victoria's reign from 1837 to 1901. During the nineteenth-century, novelists recognised the changing society and the gradual shift to questioning the existing ideals and values were documented in fiction. James explains the gradation of the Victorian novel that raises new issues that started developing in society:

> [t]he great diversity of the 'Victorian' period … shows how novels became a means through which readers defined their social identity and formed their attitudes to such issues as nationalism, gender differences and the nature of the family. This leads to a consideration of how the novel emerged as a 'realist' form, closely linked to history and biography, responding to the religious and scientific controversies of the time. (xi)

The shift from romanticism to the exploratory with intricate plotlines and complex characters are characteristic of the turn of the century novel. This new literary style is quintessentially Forsterian: it does not completely sacrifice the romantic literary style, but rather brings up intricacies within that style and tradition and leads the way to explore new possibilities. Some modernist contemporaries of Forster's, such as Conrad, Joyce, Eliot and Woolf, shared the belief that human truth is always partial and needs to be presented as such. These modernist writers have a common feature in their writing that is also especially apparent in Forster's writing: their writing moves from the traditional and romantic style of objective writing to subjective expressionist writing about individual experiences.

David Trotter presents a similar approach, according to which modernist literature is characterised by "the rejection of the existing consensus between writer and reader and an investment in innovatory techniques" (3). According to Trotter, the concept of modernism suggests that literature was produced as a product of a specific crisis (3). That is, modernism was a literary response against a disruption of social continuity, and writers responded to these societal disruptions through their writing. Trotter highlights the complexity of the term modernism, as its function shows a specific cultural trend which determined how writers of the time wrote (4). However, this kind of categorisation of the concept separated writers to those who used innovative techniques and those who did not. Trotter proposes a more encompassing view of the concept by looking at it more broadly in terms of literary style, narrative and subject matter (5-7, 290). A more inclusive concept allows writers of both the romantic and the modern literary tradition to flourish without excluding one or the other just by form or content. Social struggles and individual experiences are central themes of the era and both can be presented in different traditions.

Liberals rejected the Victorian past and its ideals and values and showed support for the middle class. The middle class included both some of the wealthier public as well as the lower struggling middle class, therefore the liberals were faced with a struggle of being sympathetic and understanding of the middle class in its entirety. Peter Widdowson explains the values of the liberal humanists as "[t]olerance, liberty, reason, generosity, freedom of speech, democracy, non-aggression, reform of public abuses, respect for civil rights, personal relations, civilized discourse, the regard for art, the intellect and tradition" (39). The values presented are difficult to uphold, since some are contradictory: this is the struggle of the liberal ideal. These values are challenged by the modern industrial society and they entail

inequalities and discrepancies in the liberal tradition. Forster was aware of these polarities within the liberal tradition and he describes these challenges in his novels.

Trilling describes the liberal tradition as a "body of middle class opinion which includes such ideas as progress, collectivism and humanitarianism" (Trilling 13). Widdowson responds to the place of the liberal tradition in society as complicated, since it is committed to justice and culture but imposed with contradictory values (19). For example, the liberal is understanding but not accepting and Widdowson presents the liberal paradox of "wishing to be part, but apart" (19). Widdowson's claim is explained through the contrastive and intangible beliefs of liberals: liberals believe in the inevitability of progress, justice and in the middle-class good-sense while relying on economic stability and taking property for granted (27-28). Liberals neglect the seriousness of the changes that society and the world is going through, thus, liberals fail because they claim to understand the condition and struggles of society.

Scholars have for decades studied the modernist literary tradition and as Forster's whole career as a writer and critic focuses on understanding ordinary people and the English society, he has received much attention. David Medalie has written a detailed study on Forster's modernist approach and style of writing in relation to his view of the modernist tradition. Medalie's approach to modernist writing and tradition complements the major themes of Forster's novels: "the rescue efforts, the recasting of traditions, the desperate experimentalism are inseparable from the recognition of what is no longer tenable, the elegies, and the sorrows born of newness" (1). Medalie recognises the clashing of ideas and values and how the Victorian tradition fights for survival, while the industrialised world is slowly taking over and redefining what it means to be archetypically English.

Humanism and liberalism are major themes in the Edwardian novel and these themes are crucial in depicting hope and recovery from loss during difficult times. Liberals were faced with a crisis during the first decades of the twentieth century: the survival of liberalism was challenged in the changing conditions of modernity. Medalie explains the condition of liberalism of the early twentieth century and how it changed focus from laissez-faire economics and libertarian principles to the empowerment of the individual and social freedom (4). Liberals were forced to look beyond their liberal thinking and find other options and possibilities. Empowerment of the individual and social freedom suggests possibility, and possibility and change are what the modernist writer searches for: "there is a perception that the modernist writer must contend with restriction as well as possibility. Following on from

this, there is the recognition that restriction itself confers new kinds of possibility" (Medalie 69).

Medalie connects the liberal crisis to modernists who recognised the challenges and changing conditions of the liberals. He suggests that modernists

> were prescient in recognising that liberalism and humanism, particularly in their nineteenth-century forms and ambitions, were entering a period of historical inhospitality, as it were; and while, especially in the Edwardian period, there were many who were hopeful that the threat could be staved off, the modernists were articulating that uncongenial reception. (Medalie 3)

Thus, exploring the condition and challenges of ordinary people are the first signs of modernist writing. Liberals must reconsider their own and others' place in society in a changing world. This world opens possibilities and with the new century comes more freedom or at least the possibility of freedom. The liberals' support for individual freedom but holding on to their past ideas and ideals of economic dependence complicates their status in society. Their contradictory beliefs and ideals are what constitutes the liberal crisis, and this is the major theme that Forster tries to portray and untangle in his novels.

Medalie notes that Forster's writing is characterised by the convergence of different themes, namely that of romantic elements and realist conventions (64). Romanticism and realism work in tandem to help construct a literary genre that fits its time: the struggles and polarities of the Edwardian era are reflected in the works of the authors of its time. By joining these two literary themes, the authors process such clashes through their narrative. The Edwardian era is a tug of war between the traditional and modern values and ideas, and the same goes for literature: literary styles were redeveloped, and themes of conflicts and personal struggle became more popular.

Realism explored the possibilities of human values, but these human values were subject to change and were challenged. Novels of the Edwardian era were realist in style as the human condition is challenged by driving modern forces. Robert Post explains the genre of the realist novel as "the aesthetic result of the attempt to represent in fiction a world in which value has no distinct ontological status, and in which human meaning is perceived to reside in the unending and indissoluble tension between self and society" (390). Tension between individuals and society is apparent in the realist novel, but for novels to be realist, they need to maintain a probability of truth. Thus, Post suggests that a writer needs to

maintain a moral realism and see truth as set in the nature of things rather than seeing it as a subjective view of human reaction (369). R. P. Blackmur has stated that moral realism is "a theoretic form for our experience of life" (qtd in Post 369). The condition of the individual and moral struggles is what characterises the moral realist. Trilling argues that the moral realist is aware of the complexities of living a moral life, that is, through contradictions and struggles the true moral character is revealed (12). The moral character and flaws of individuals and society is a crucial feature in *Howards End* and Forster uses moral realism to reveal the dichotomies and struggles of British society.

1.3. Previous criticism

Critics have studied the social struggle of British life in Edwardian England and Forster's novels have often been used to interpret the changing and struggling society. Edwardian novels have been subject to detailed analysis and some main claims of the literary style and tradition of the time have been presented. This brief overview gives a framework of Forster's established place in British literary history and shows the value of his works as innovative and socio-historically significant in terms of understanding middle-class England in the years preceding the first world war.

Forster's writing made him an exemplary author for understanding the personal and individual struggles of citizens. Daniel Schwarz argues that the success of *Howards End* is due to Forster's narrative style of not making assumptions and conclusions, but showing the moral complexities of human life (9, 116). His writing is based on sociohistorical representation while being fictional. The story is subjective and represents Forster's interpretation of England and change in British social consciousness. Schwarz's argument further substantiates the claim that Forster is a modernist writer by his "realization that the relative stability of the Victorian era give way to the anxiety and dubiety of the modern era" (1). However, as already noted, Forster does not completely neglect Victorian traditions and values and Schwarz argues that *Howards End* is an elegy for the Victorian rural civilisation (19). Schwarz establishes that Forster and his contemporaries add personal struggles and values in their works: "by making themselves their subject they have, in fact, created a more subjective, selfexpressive novel than their predecessors, and that they *are* present in their works" (8, emphasis original). According to Schwarz, Forster is able to add his personal opinions and struggles into his works in order to decompress and challenge the pre-existing

norms of writing historical fiction. An apt example of this is Forster's last novel *Maurice* (1971) that was published posthumously due to the controversial topic of same-sex love.

Schwarz continues to develop the idea of depicting personal struggles in novels of the early twentieth century, in which writers:

> had to discover an appropriate form with which to show (if I may baldly list the striking characteristics of the period) that motives could not be fully understood, that the world was not created and shaped by divine providence, that chance might determine man's destiny, that man's desires and aspirations were not likely to be fulfilled, that social institutions were ineffectual, and that materialism and industrialization were destroying the fabric of life. (21)

For writers to successfully depict personal experiences and struggles, new literary styles need to be established. Forster and his contemporaries invented the modernist style of writing, by adding intricate plotlines with fragmented characters, questionable moral choices to characters that might seem insignificant, flawed and unacknowledged. The focus lies on depicting new characters that seem insignificant and whose struggles do not extend to the larger public. However, by creating such characters, modernist writers are challenging hierarchical constructions within the social system and emphasising the moral complexities of ordinary citizens.

Kenneth Womack approaches Forster's writing as a challenge to the existing norms in England at the turn of the century: "The parlance of family systems psychotherapy offers a particular useful means for explicating Forster's illustrations of class and culture and the roadblocks that they erect in England's pathways to the kind of national morphogenesis necessary for its society to bond and endure" (256). It is in Forster's depiction of the struggles within the middle class, especially the portrayal of the lower middle class, that Womack recognises a major theme in British literature at the turn of the twentieth-century. Womack connects his close reading of *Howards* End with therapy and building personal change. He claims that through narrative therapy, a person is able to see the inequalities and discrepancies in their world view and behaviour in relation to their surroundings. Thus, through the conflicting and exploratory views Forster depicts in his novel, he attains a narrative therapy both for himself and for his readers (Womack 265). Womack explains that Forster reveals the inequalities of the superstructure of the British class system through his fiction so as to make the readers rethink the existing hierarchical within their own society.

Womack argues that Forster's novels open possibilities to change the existing society by critiquing the social system in his fiction and by offering hope to unite society and blur class differences. Thus, the focus on three families and the struggles outside and within the families are, according to Womack, the strength in Forster's writing as it centres on England's "obsessions with rank, social standing, and pedigree" (255).

Studies on Forster emphasise Forster as a writer that concerns social issues within society. In modernist literary style he portrays social interactions within the middle class. Womack discusses social relationships as a central theme in the literature of the Edwardian era. He argues for the significance of social interaction and relationships in order to understand the society as a whole (Womack 256). The value of understanding relationships and social interaction reflect on the condition of the changing England at the turn of the century in a broad and inclusive way. That is, Forster uses individual experiences and their emotional and intellectual growths as a key to understand the condition of the English people and the change in English consciousness. Womack explains that the characters need to undergo ethical dilemmas and experience difficulties and controversies in order to grow emotionally (258). These features in modernist novels are all crucial to construct the larger social picture that correlates with contemporary society: a narrative that recognises the crisis within its own community and blurs the social structure that dominates society.

In sum, Womack explains that by portraying regular individuals within and outside their own class in fiction, a possible solution for the obsolete social superstructure in England or at least a wider understanding of society is established. Womack argues that Forster is a crucial writer of his time who raises these socio-historical issues within his own society: Forster's complex and flawed characters are used to portray the broader social dilemmas in society. Schwarz also recognises the complexity of Forster's writing in which the storytelling reveals complex societal and cultural dilemmas that characterise the beginning of the twentieth century (117). Thus, examining the existing structures of social life in narratives, and in extension one's own place in society, the modern condition of the social classes and individuals is revealed.

2. Blurring social classes in *Howards End*

From the very beginning of the novel a contrast is made between the Schlegels and Wilcoxes in that both families represent different eras and cultures that are in internal turmoil due to the changing times. The novel depicts how these families (as well as the Basts) interact in England where social worlds collide and are alienated. First these families are discussed separately in order to show how they deal with the changing society in England in 1910s and what they represent. Then follows a more comprehensive discussion of how the interaction between the families reveal a complex narrative that deals with different situations and challenges the characters to reconsider their respective ideas and ideals. I study how each family represents different values and classes in the early twentieth century, after which I discuss how these values and ideals of the families are problematised in the novel. Thus, my aim is to connect the families with the condition of England and place the novel as a socio-historical representation of Forster's view of England socially in flux.

2.1 The conventional Wilcoxes

> They avoided the personal note in life. All Wilcoxes did. It did not seem of supreme importance. Or it may be as Helen supposed: they realized its importance, but were afraid of it. (Forster 101-102)[1]

The Wilcoxes are a rich family and represent power and property: "the Wilcoxes *are* England" (*Punch* qtd in Furbank 188, emphasis original). Furbank connects the Wilcox family with the Poston family that Forster knew: they were a rich family who lived on an estate in the countryside and Forster's mother Lily was good friends with Mrs Poston. Forster has described the Postons as "country residents rather edging in to be society" (Forster qtd in Furbank 25). The evident parallel between the Postons and Wilcoxes further substantiates Forster's narrative as a representation of the historical England at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Wilcoxes are finance capitalists and believe that they are quintessentially English and "that what [they] did not know could not be worth knowing" (138). They represent the pillars of the conservative Edwardian upper class who do not bother with socialism, cosmopolitanism and women's emancipation. Charles, the eldest son of the family, is strongest in these beliefs and is portrayed as a capitalist and imperialist. He shows his dislike towards Helen, the rotten apple of the Schlegel family, due to her stark liberalist

[1] Subsequent references to *Howards End* will be given in page numbers.

views. In contrast, Ruth Wilcox represents old values while understanding and accepting the changing world.

The novel starts with a letter from Helen Schlegel to her sister Margaret. Helen has just spent a weekend with the Wilcoxes and Helen questions the prejudice of the wealthier middle-class family: “Why did we settle that their house would be all gables and wiggles, and their garden all gamboge-coloured paths? I believe simply because we associate them with expensive hotels – Mrs. Wilcox trailing in beautiful dresses down long corridors, Mr. Wilcox bullying porters, etc.” (19). Helen’s view of the Wilcoxes shows that she believes them to be privileged and traditional with no concern for society outside of their own ideals and values. In fact, this is how Forster depicts the Wilcox family, mostly through Helen’s frustration with the Wilcox family, but also in contrast to the other families. The Wilcox family is supposed to represent the wealthier middle class that is ridiculed and formed objectionable and obsolete in the modern world.

Ruth Wilcox is presented as a simple woman from a traditional family, who thinks that “it is wiser to leave action and discussion to men” (87). Trilling claims that “[h]er strength comes exactly from her lack of force, her distinction from her lack of distinguishing traits” (121). The Wilcoxes represent Victorian materialism and the patriarchal hierarchical order, which is evident in the depiction of the women of the Wilcox family: “They are devoid of imagination, passion, sentiment, ‘poetry’; they do have affection but they are unable to express it” (Trilling 68). Ruth Wilcox abides by the patriarchal order and does not contradict the male members of the family. Forster’s portrayal of Ruth Wilcox as someone who avoids confrontation and display of emotions is evident in the first scene she appears in: Mrs Munt, the aunt of the Schlegel siblings, has arrived to Howards End to find out about Helen and Paul’s engagement. She meets Charles, who starkly objects to the engagement, thus enraging Mrs Munt. Ruth Wilcox arrives to solve the quarrel before it even begins so as to hinder any further confrontation between the families, “as a competent society hostess would have done” (36). In this scene Helen describes Ruth Wilcox:

> One knew that she worshipped the past, and that the instinctive wisdom the past can alone bestow had descended upon her – that wisdom to which we give the clumsy name of aristocracy. High born she might not be. But assuredly she cared about her ancestors, and let them help her. When she saw Charles angry, Paul frightened, and Mrs. Munt in tears, she heard her ancestors say, “Separate

> those human beings who will hurt each other most. The rest can wait." So she did not ask questions. (36)

Ruth Wilcox pre-emptively avoids the confrontation and dispute between her son Charles and Mrs Munt. Ruth Wilcox follows the Victorian tradition and does not wish to see the traditional and modern values clash. The ominous and premonitory "The rest can wait" can be seen as a reference to the developing friendship between Ruth Wilcox and Margaret. Their friendship shows the clashing of cultures and classes. What makes their friendship so crucial to the story is that despite her traditional values and ideas, Ruth Wilcox is open to see the world view of others. Without being judgemental Ruth Wilcox is familiarised with the Schlegels way of life and tries to understand the younger generation's view. Trilling argues that Ruth Wilcox's understanding and sympathetic portrayal is due to Forster's own sympathy for the yeoman class that Ruth Wilcox represents (119). It can therefore be said that despite her being the symbol and character for the Victorian tradition and ideas, Ruth Wilcox symbolises a hope of a new integrated England, where the Victorian tradition and liberal tradition can unite. However, by Ruth Wilcox's death, Forster suggests that the Victorian tradition cannot survive in a liberal and modern England, as Ruth Wilcox is too deep in her traditions and cannot fully connect with Margaret's ideals.

Trilling claims that the long tradition of having firm class lines and faith in authority and the higher classes is reconsidered in the modern novel (117). The authority of Henry Wilcox and his sons is apparent and the status of the Wilcox family as conventional who are stuck in traditional values is emphasised: "We, the upper classes – thought we would help him [Leonard Bast] from the height of our superior knowledge – and here's the result" (192). Henry Wilcox sees himself as superior in relation to Leonard Bast and finds that these two should not be meddled with: let the lower classes be for themselves, only harm will come from meddling with lower classes, since the lower classes cannot endure what the upper classes can. Henry Wilcox's opinion on helping other classes is in line with his argument throughout the novel that class structure is an essential English feature in order for the country and its people to prosper and live in harmony. He does not see beyond his own class and own advantages, as he is for "survival of the fittest" (193) and finds the Schlegels foolish in their attempts to unite these values and ideas that should not be mixed.

Henry Wilcox and his sons Charles and Paul decide to ignore the deceased Ruth Wilcox's last wish to give Howards End to Margaret, arguing that she had not been in her right mind when the letter was written. To the living Wilcoxes, the country house is only a

piece of property. They refuse to acknowledge any sentimental value it might have had to Ruth Wilcox and do not even consider the friendship that Ruth Wilcox and Margaret had. Margaret describes Henry as "a good average Englishman" that characterises the rest of the men in the family. On several occasions Henry Wilcox ends arguments or discussion by referring to the patriarchal hierarchy, as women should not bother to think or object. Arguments are concluded with an abrupt comment from Henry Wilcox, for example: "At all events, you mustn't worry" and claiming it to be "a man's business" (245).

Despite Helen's harsher portrayal of the Wilcoxes, the Wilcoxes are not completely wrong in their ideals and values. Forster shows that while Henry Wilcox is conventional, shows little emotions and is focused on business but through his marriage to Margaret he learns to view the world a little differently. Margaret ponders on the Wilcox family: "They were not 'her sort,' they were often suspicious and stupid, and deficient where she excelled; but collision with them stimulated her, and she felt an interest that verged into liking" (111). Margaret sees how the Wilcoxes think and work, which makes her realise that they are not as cruel as Helen believes them to be. The Wilcoxes lack social skills and do not appreciate culture and art as she does, but they understand the world differently from her. Margaret sees the importance of the Wilcoxes in society: "She desired to protect them, and often felt that they could protect her, excelling where she was deficient. Once past the rocks of emotion, they knew so well what to do, whom to send for; their hands were on all the ropes, they had grit as well as grittiness, and she valued grit enormously" (111-112). Margaret recognises that Helen's opinion of the Wilcoxes is irrationally made and does not correctly describe their world view and ideals. Despite their lack of emotions, Margaret is aware of their crucial role in society and their grit is what keeps England from falling. Thus, through Margaret the true nature of the Wilcoxes is revealed and their value and status in society is established but also contrasted. The Wilcoxes protect England and thrive (financially) in the changing world.

Male patriarchy is foregrounded in the portrayal and mannerism of the Wilcox family. Charles Wilcox, the discernible capitalist and imperialist of the Wilcox family, is portrayed as a character too set in his ways, whose sole purpose is to hold on to traditions and conventions. Charles is intimidated by the Schlegels entering the lives of the Wilcoxes and Charles is determined not to let them have any of his father's money. The brief scene, which shows the everyday life of Charles and his wife Dolly, strengthens Charles' faith in male patriarchy as well as distinct class distinctions even within the middle class. Here, Dolly is described as talking nonsense and running around the house looking after their offspring,

while Charles does not listen to his wife and has his own opinions about how to not let the Schlegels be part of their family. Dolly's inconsequential character is obvious, as the scene begins with "Charles had just been scolding his Dolly" (186). Dolly is seen as something that can be possessed and seems so by her giving him an heir and taking care of him. Also, this strengthens the argument that the Wilcoxes believe the world to be a man's world and the men should do the decision making and thinking. There are not many scenes in the book that describe Charles, but this scene of only two pages is enough to provide the reader of a characterisation of the typical capitalist who still believes in patriarchy and in keeping the English social-class superstructure intact as it was before the liberals.

Male dominance in the upper-middle classes is also shown through the depiction of the other Wilcox siblings. Evie Wilcox accepts her place as the daughter in the family, by marrying rich and continuing the Victorian tradition of maintaining power and property. Evie lacks personality and her asset is her beauty:

> Evie had grown up handsome … she was the best the Wilcoxes could do in the way of feminine beauty. For the present, puppies and her father were the only things she loved, but the net of matrimony was being prepared for her, and a few days later she was attracted to a Mr. Percy Cahill, an uncle of Mrs Charles's, and he was attracted to her. (154)

The lack of personalisation of Evie and the neglect of Ruth Wilcox and her wishes strengthen the male dominance of the Victorian tradition that still prevails in twentieth-century England. Evie agrees to marry with whomever her family chooses and the only traits that are of importance is her appearance and how she obeys her father and older brother. A very similar characterisation is seen in Charles' wife Dolly as she is as well only good for keeping the house in order and giving him an heir.

Paul Wilcox is the youngest son of the Wilcox family. At the beginning of the novel Helen falls in love with him and they get engaged, only to have that engagement ended before it even started by his father and family. Forster depicts this in such terms that it is the male patriarchs who decide the future of the youngest. Forster depicts this through the eyes of Helen:

> Somehow, when that kind of man looks frightened it is too awful. It is all right for us to be frightened, or for men of another sort – father, for instance; but for men like that! When I saw all the others so placid, and Paul mad with terror in

> case I said the wrong thing, I felt for a moment that the whole Wilcox family was a fraud, just a wall of newspapers and motor-cars and golf-clubs, and all that if it fell I should find nothing behind it but panic and emptiness. (39-40)

Helen, being an outsider of the Wilcox family and having viewed them for only a few days, notices the potential threat to their way of life. As Helen claims, she sees them as frauds and that their reactions to Paul's irrationality is a direct threat to how the Wilcoxes are supposed to behave. Helen's exclamation that "men like that" are not supposed to show weakness aptly suits the characteristics of the upper-middle class in England at the time: they are the pillars of the English tradition and Victorian values and Helen realises its fragility. Forster highlights the Wilcox manner where emotion and failure is rejected. When it is revealed that Henry Wilcox had an affair with Jacky Bast several years ago, Henry claims that "I am a man, and have lived a man's past" (230). However, Forster highlights Wilcoxes' conventional values in that mistakes are not allowed for people like them and Henry "saw his whole life crumbling" (230).

In conclusion, Forster constructs the Wilcoxes as those who keep the Victorian tradition alive. They continue to make money and the classes are essentially in place: "Nature is turning out Wilcoxes in this peaceful abode, so that they may inherit the earth" (187). The younger Wilcox generation of the Victorian tradition take on the views of their predecessors. Charles is a continuation to his fathers' power and property mantra, Evie obeys without objection to an arranged marriage and the youngest Wilcox, Paul, is one-dimensional and represents the last of the Imperials by serving his country and the Empire. However, the Wilcoxes need to rethink their values and ideals, since they need to acknowledge the rising lower-middle classes and the blurred line within the social hierarchy. Henry Wilcox goes through the strongest change in the novel: his marriage to Margaret helps him understand society outside of his own world view. Margaret realises she cannot push him too far and she needs to accept that his values are set and cannot be changed in a short period of time. Her only attempt is to make him understand the larger world. Despite the upsetting encounters with the Schlegels and the Basts, the Wilcox family and the Victorian tradition is not defeated, and they remain the survivors of the Edwardian era.

2.2. The romantic Schlegels

> A word on their origin. They were not "English to the backbone", as their aunt had piously asserted. But, on the other band, they were not "Germans of the dreadful sort". Their father had belonged to a type that was more prominent in Germany fifty years ago than now. He was not the aggressive German, so dear to the English journalist, nor the domestic German, so dear to the English wit. If one classed him at all it would be as the countryman of Hegel and Kant, as the idealist, inclined to be dreamy, whose Imperialism was the Imperialism of the air. (42)

The Schlegels dual nationality allows the siblings a more colourful and dynamic characterisation than that of the Wilcoxes or the Basts. They are liberal, intellectual and cultured. Widdowson defines the liberal humanist as someone whose values "are the product of middle-class culture in the ascendancy, and especially of that culture's élite" (39). The liberal humanists are a challenge to the higher-class capitalists as they believe in cultural development and change. Key values for the liberal humanists are tolerance, personal relations, democracy and the regard for art and the intellect. These characteristics are all applicable to some extent to the Schlegel siblings. Their German side denies them of the Wilcoxian status in society, but their steady income from their father's inheritance keeps them comfortable in London society. From the beginning, by the abrupt denial of Helen Schlegel's and Paul Wilcox's engagement, it is established that the values and ideas of the Wilcoxes and Schlegels collide. The dispute and misconceptions of the families show the struggle of a society in turmoil where social values and ideals clash. The Schlegel family is depicted as the in-between class, a cosmopolitan family with modern ideals that challenges the traditions and values of nineteenth-century England.

Whereas Charles is the personification of the Wilcoxian tradition, Tibby Schlegel is an extreme of the liberal tradition who represents the aesthetic view "art for art's sake". Tibby is lazy, snobbish and withdrawn, and "he was not enough interested in human life to see where things will lead to" but "[h]e had a strong regard for honesty" (303). He lacks an understanding for other people and finds it difficult to fathom his sisters arguing over Leonard Bast's situation. In fact, due to his disregard of emotions, Tibby is able to see Leonard's discomfort with Helen's attempts at righting a wrong, that is, helping Leonard overcome poverty. Tibby is not concerned with the rich and the poor and he is apathetic to Leonard's situation. Tibby's detachment from others can be seen in the depiction of his

experiences at Oxford: “His sisters sent him there that he might make friends, for they knew that his education had been cranky, and had severed him from other boys and men. He made no friends. His Oxford remained Oxford empty, and he took into life with him, not the memory of a radiance, but the memory of a colour scheme” (114). Tibby is interested in all matters of life, but only through books and art, since he has no inclination to experience anything. As Tibby does not need to have any concern for money, he becomes secluded from society and resolves to academic escapism.

Helen Schlegel is impulsive and strong-minded, or as Margaret describes her sister’s impulsiveness, “new ideas had burst upon her like a thunderclap, and by them and by their reverberations she had been stunned” (37). Initially, Helen the idealist is fascinated by the Wilcox family and even neglects her own liberal views as she is stunned by the contrastive world view of the Wilcoxes:

> [S]he had *liked* being told that her notions of life were sheltered or academic; that Equality was nonsense, Votes for Women nonsense, Socialism nonsense, Art and Literature, except when conducive to strengthening the character, nonsense. One by one the Schlegel fetishes had been overthrown, and, though professing to defend them, she had rejoiced. (37-38, emphasis original)

The Wilcoxes are so different from the Schlegels that she is at first so fascinated by their narrow-mindedness that she forgets her own ideals and values. Helen’s initial acceptance but quick dismissal of the Wilcox family further shows her to be impulsive. The above quote also reveals the values that the liberal Schlegel family stands for with their love for literature and art, equality and women’s rights. Paul B. Armstrong conceptualises liberalism as a shared belief in equality, tolerance and value in self-expression (281-283). Similarly, Peter Widdowson argues for the idealist values of the Schlegels on the basis of their belief in “‘personal relations’, passion, culture, and so on” (85). These values are all shared by the Schlegel family. Modernism and the modern way of life is presented through the Schlegels in their attempts to change and blur the existing social class structure.

Helen is a contradictory, even hypocritical, character for she despises the Wilcoxes for their way of life and their obsession with money, whereas she takes money for granted as she receives it unearned. Also, her paradoxical behaviour is seen from the very beginning, as was clear in an earlier quote where she describes Paul when he wanted to deny their engagement: Helen sees them as hypocritical and frauds but neglects the fact that the

Wilcoxes are the pillars of England. Margaret and Helen argue over Margaret marrying Henry Wilcox and Margaret reveals Helen's single-minded views and who was "over-interested in the subconscious self" and worried that "if [Helen] dwelt on this she, too, would eliminate the personal" (194). Kenneth Womack explains how *Howards End* is a novel of self-awareness and a pivotal work that reveals discrepancies in individual values and opinions that threaten further alienation and separation between classes and people (265). Helen's values are contradictory and thus strengthen the liberal dilemma of the early twentieth century. Margaret portrays Helen as a character who lacks the empathy and broadened world view and who threatens further isolation among the middle class. Helen believes to understand and help Leonard but fails to fathom his true sentiments and opinions. Helen threatens the liberal idea of individuality as she sees Leonard as a project rather than an equal. In fact, Helen's actions to help him have only further alienated Leonard from the Schlegels.

Helen is depicted throughout as a threat to the traditional, first by her engagement to Paul, then by her trying to get Henry Wilcox to help Leonard, and finally by her moving to Howards End with Margaret, Henry and Leonard's child. Thus, the clashing of cultures and classes happens largely through Helen and her actions. Helen is a strong idealist which causes her to not perceive the struggles that for example Margaret sees. The differences between the sisters and Helen's idealistic views are defined through Margaret:

> 'Helen wouldn't agree with me here,' [Margaret] continued. 'Helen daren't slang the rich, being rich herself, but she would like to. There's an odd notion, that I haven't yet got hold of, running about at the back of her brain, that poverty is somehow "real". She dislikes all organization, and probably confuses wealth with the technique of wealth. Sovereigns in a stocking wouldn't bother her; cheques do. Helen is too relentless. One can't deal in her high-handed manner with the world'. (183)

Much of the storyline revolves around Leonard Bast and Helen's attempt to alleviate his poverty. Her absolute views that this is a flaw in the social system and her adamant attempts at trying to fix it ends in her making things worse. Helen insists on making the Wilcoxes pay for Leonard's misfortunes by claiming it is their duty and makes her own attempts to save the Basts. Helen takes wealth for granted and feels guilty for having money when there are people like the Basts who have no money. When Helen tries to give money to the Basts, they refuse, and she ends up reinvesting it and thus making even more money. Helen's struggle

not to accept the world as it is and failing to make a change in it shows the idealistic view that cannot exist in England: in order to connect values, ideas and ideals, one needs to understand the complex views of all parties. Helen fails at this, which is why Margaret Schlegel becomes the realist who sees the world as a whole.

Womack discusses Margaret as the focaliser in the novel, since it is Margaret who becomes the subject of personal growth and through her storyline the lines between the classes are blurred and questioned (258). In Margaret's character, the readers are exposed to the struggles within and between the classes: Margaret does not agree with the Wilcoxes, nor does she agree with her sister whose values are different and intensified in the novel. By her development, Margaret becomes the crucial character who tries to adapt to modern England. As noted above, the Edwardian era was characterised by global forces and political and social conflicts in England. Margaret's struggles become a parallel to that of England's. Forster depicts how Margaret meets challenges and questions her values and ideas to show the uncertainties of the era. Forster makes sure not to make Margaret the ideal intermediary of the classes by reflecting on her faults and insecurities. She admits to Ruth Wilcox: "I have everything to learn – absolutely everything – just as much as Helen. Life's very difficult and full of surprises. At all events, I've got as far as that" (83). This strengthens the instability in England and the personalities of the characters in the novel.

At times Margaret is faced with principles that go against her own views and values. This is most evident in her hindering Helen from talking to Henry at Evie's wedding. This takes place at the end of the novel as Helen has brought Leonard and Jacky Bast to the wedding to make Henry responsible for the Basts' misfortunes. Margaret keeps Henry away from the conflict and deals with Helen herself. The scene parallels a similar scene at the beginning of the novel: Ruth Wilcox announcing the end of the engagement before any arguing starts. Margaret's decision to resolve the conflict herself has some similarities to the Wilcoxes, as they do not wish to make a scene and resolve tensions fast and without any emotional outburst. This scene is where the two sisters stand on opposite sides. Margaret now represents the Wilcoxes and Helen continues to help the Basts. The contrasts between the sisters are alluded to throughout the novel but in this clashing scene it is prominent.

Whereas Helen took money for granted and neglected to see the hypocrisy in her trying to give money to the Basts, Margaret understands her and her sibling's relation to money and the liberties it brings:

> You and I and the Wilcoxes stand upon money as upon islands. It is so firm beneath our feet that we forget its very existence. It's only when we see someone near us tottering that we realize all that an independent income means. Last night, when we were talking up here round the fire, I began to think that the very soul of the world is economic, and that the lowest abyss is not the absence of love, but the absence of coin. (72)

Margaret describes their first encounter with Leonard Bast and she sees his struggles and how far they are from her own struggles. As they meet, Leonard attempts to discuss literature and culture, whereas the Schlegels are more interested in his position in society. Margaret who is aware of her privileged financial dependence allows her to view the Wilcoxes more positively than Helen. Margaret is constantly aware of this liberal dilemma by connecting their own hypocrisy and reliance on money. The above quote is discussed later, since it has important features of imagery that further strengthen class distinctions and the power of money. Margaret is well aware that people like the Wilcoxes are what made England what it is now: "If Wilcoxes hadn't worked and died in England for thousands of years, you and I couldn't sit here without having our throats cut. There would be no trains, no ships to carry us literary people about in, no fields even" (177). Margaret goes on: "More and more do I refuse to draw my income and sneer at those who guarantee it" (177). Margaret's understanding of the Wilcoxes stems from this realist view of her own liberalism. She understands that England cannot survive without them.

In sum, Forster constructs condition of the liberal crisis in his portrayal of the Schlegel siblings. In Helen and Tibby, the liberal condition is presented as a flaw rather than a benefit, whereas Margaret shares some of the liberal values but questions them. The key values for the liberal humanists are portrayed in the siblings: Tibby is focused on art and the intellect, Helen finds inequality in the democratic system which she gains from and Margaret represents the tolerant. The liberal crisis needs to find a solution which might entail for them to reconsider their values. Forster portrays Margaret, the moral realist, as an intermediary and a solution for the liberal intellectuals to take the changing world into account.

2.3. The opportunist Basts

> If only he could talk like this, he would have caught the world. Oh, to acquire culture! Oh, to pronounce foreign names correctly! Oh, to be well informed,

> discoursing at ease on every subject that a lady started! But it would take one years. With an hour at lunch and a few shattered hours in the evening, how was it possible to catch up with leisured women, who had been reading steadily from childhood? (52-53)

On the far lower end of the middle class and on the verge of poverty, Leonard and his wife Jacky Bast represent the possibilities of social ascendancy in the new modern world. Forster depicts the poorer middle class mostly through Leonard and his obsession with becoming cultured and his hopes to advance in social hierarchy. Upon meeting the Schlegels, Leonard attempts to display his cultured side, but is left frustrated as the Schlegels are more concerned with helping Leonard make more money. Leonard is paradoxically a character who resembles the Wilcoxes, since they are all obsessed with class: the Wilcoxes in maintaining class hierarchy and Leonard in climbing up the social-class ladder.

Forster's writing seems at times rather detailed and explanatory, as is the Victorian style of writing, but it serves to depict the conditions of the characters. David Trotter suggests that this style of detailed explaining in Forster's writing is crucial to highlight the class differences and the social inequalities of the Edwardian era (88-89). Here, for instance, Forster uses explanatory detailing of Leonard's character:

> The boy, Leonard Bast, stood at the extreme verge of gentility. He was not in the abyss, but he could see it, and at times people whom he knew had dropped in, and counted no more. He knew that he was poor, and would admit it: he would have died sooner than confess any inferiority to the rich. This may be splendid of him. But he was inferior to most rich people, there is not the least doubt of it. He was not as courteous as the average rich man, nor as intelligent, nor as healthy, nor as lovable. His mind and his body had been alike underfed, because he was poor, and because he was modern they were always craving better food. Had he lived some centuries ago, in the brightly coloured civilizations of the past, he would have had a definite status, his rank and his income would have corresponded. But in his day the angel of Democracy had arisen, enshadowing the classes with leathern wings, and proclaiming, "All men are equal – all men, that is to say, who possess umbrellas," and so he was obliged to assert gentility, lest he slipped into the abyss where nothing counts, and the statements of Democracy are inaudible. (58)

The first remark in this quote is the use of "the boy", in a way that no other character is described. Mary Pinkerton has studied Forster's narrative techniques to enhance the alienation and lower-class status of the Basts in *Howards End* (237-239). Instead of using personal pronouns and referring to Leonard by his name, Forster uses "the boy" (58) and "a nice creature" (149), and Henry Wilcox describes Leonard as "one of that writer sort" (150). Also, as noted above, Helen's view on Leonard as "not a man, but a cause" is another way to indicate the lower-class status of Leonard Bast (303). Pinkerton suggests that the effect of these narrative techniques is to alienate Leonard and Jacky Bast from the other families (238). Leonard's inferior position and the highlighting of his inadequacies strengthens the view of the inferiority of the lower-classes. The quote mentions the umbrella that Helen mistakenly took from Leonard during the concert. When Leonard goes to the Schlegels to retrieve his umbrella, Helen mistakenly criticises the broken umbrella that turns out to be his. He is ashamed as his lower status is distinct as he only has one umbrella, whereas the Schlegels have several and Helen often loses them. As the quote emphasises, Leonard is still part of democracy as he does possess an umbrella, even though it is broken. Furthermore, the abyss that Forster refers to is further down in the class hierarchy than Leonard, since he is still part of the middle class. Thus, the lower-middle class is not completely outside the society from the rest of the middle class. Leonard can take part in the concert and can attempt at having intellectual conversations with the Schlegels.

Forster uses Leonard to describe the poorer class that struggles to prosper in a world run by the Wilcoxes. Alas, Leonard, a clerk, is aware of the social classes and the seemingly impossible task to rise from poverty: "I wish I was wrong, but – the clergyman – he has no money of his own, or else he's paid; the poet or the musician – just the same; the tramp – he's no different. The tramp goes to the workhouse in the end, and is paid for with other people's money. Miss Schlegel, the real thing's money and all the rest is a dream" (236). Leonard knows that money is what ultimately matters: no matter how many books or concerts Leonard attends, he will still remain at the lower end of social hierarchy. As Widdowson puts it, the Basts are a "'type' of modern English society. He is one of the 'losers', a modern figure and yet connected in the past to the 'England' which London and Wilcoxism are destroying" (70). Leonard is part of a society that cannot truly accept him due to his financial inferiority. That is, Leonard is part of the middle class that finds opportunities in the changing world and he tries to connect with the people higher up in society. Ultimately, the Wilcoxes are still the

ruling middle class and Leonard has little to no hope of becoming part of the cultured and prosperous society.

David Medalie discusses Leonard's role in the novel as someone who threatens the existing superstructure of the English class system: "As Leonard Bast's name suggests, he has become the 'bastard', the illegitimate child of society – a particularly unenviable fate in a novel that makes so much of heirs and the value, whether material or transcendent, of legacies" (16). Medalie establishes Leonard as the low brow of the middle class that is apparent in Forster's novel. Social ascendancy is outside of Leonard's grasp, but life teases him at times out of the possibility of improving his social status. However, as Medalie explains, it is already in Leonard's name that Forster denies Leonard salvation. This is the same conclusion that Margaret draws: Leonard's death is the result of him trying to cross social borders. However, whereas Leonard's fate was sealed from the very beginning, his offspring, Helen's child, is the true heir to Howards End. He may be the illegitimate son of Helen and Leonard, but he is not an illegitimate son of society. Their son climbs up in hierarchy through Helen. Forster's modernist style stands out as he continues to contradict and challenge the English social system, by the fact that Howards End is given to a new heir.

In conclusion, Leonard's wish to be cultured and his initial hope to get to know the Schlegels offers hope that Leonard develops in terms of culture. However, Helen's attempts at helping the Basts rise from poverty are futile, as it is their destined place. Forster constructs the Basts as those who are in society but on the bridge of abyss. Furthermore, their attempts in meddling with the upper-middle class enhance their opportunist characteristics. Margaret thinks about Leonard and those in similar situations as him with culture failing them, "with so many the good chaps who are wrecked in trying to cross [the social gap]" (122), whereas it saved her. In sum, Forster illustrates the struggles of the classes and the practically impenetrable wall that exists between the families.

2.4. Concluding remarks

Below I discuss the blurring of these social classes and argue that Margaret is the key to this development. I argue that crossing class hierarchies is complex, if not impossible, and that Forster addresses these problems through the relationships between the characters. Ruth Wilcox's and Margaret Schlegel's friendship is a symbolic step towards a modern British society where values and cultures are different but equal. Also, I claim that there are

similarities between the two opposites: Henry Wilcox and Leonard Bast have similar assumptions and understand the world as it is rather than how it should be according to Helen. Thus, through his novel Forster criticises the superstructure of English class system. *Howards End* contextualises class struggles and the outdated British hierarchical separation of ideas and ideals in terms of social power, which are largely conceptualised within the class structure.

Just as Henry Wilcox warns, attempts at influencing and connecting with lower classes ends in misfortune. This not only applies to the Schlegels' advice to Leonard, but also to the very beginning of the novel, where Paul and Helen are engaged but the engagement is annulled. Additionally, Henry Wilcox's involvement with Jacky Bast further strengthens his claim. In order to understand the complexities of the class structure, these incidents and setbacks are crucial to the novel. Selina Todd argues that experience is a central theme in understanding the class structure, as people relate to each other through experience (492). That is, people with similar experiences and knowledge are put in the same class and have a shared view on life, culture and values. However, Forster's modernist style questions the existing class structure through these interactions. In fact, Helen's and Margaret's misunderstanding, or rather failure to understand, Leonard Bast and his situation stems from this inherent class distinction: They simply have different life experiences.

In contrast, the friendship between Ruth Wilcox and Margaret Schlegel offers hope and shows the connection between the two families. Ruth Wilcox befriends Margaret Schlegel and their strong friendship establishes the first palpable connection between the families. Ruth Wilcox lacks the will and ability to change the values and ideals of her family, but she in fact implies the possibility of a future where values and ideals are not as definite. She sees Margaret as someone who can understand her family's values but who still maintains her own realist conventions. Forster depicts how Margaret is endowed with understanding of the Wilcoxes' values:

> They led a life that she could not attain to – the outer life of 'telegrams and anger' … To Margaret this life was to remain a real force. She could not despise it, as Helen and Tibby affected to do. It fostered such virtues as neatness, decision, and obedience, virtues of the second rank, no doubt, but they have formed our civilization. They form character, too; Margaret could not doubt it: they keep the soul from becoming sloppy. (112)

Margaret often considers the Wilcoxes and their traditions and values as inherently English and indispensable for England. She concludes by forgiving their lack of culture and broadmindedness that she possesses but understands that they are just as important to society as anyone else. Furthermore, the sloppy souls can be connected to her brother Tibby, who lacks character and is indifferent to human relations. Margaret rejects his verge of liberalism that fails to fathom social interactions and class structures. Therefore, it is ultimately through Margaret that Forster connects the different classes and sees the world as a whole. Margaret connects old values with the new through her marriage to Henry: "Our business is not to contrast the two, but to reconcile them" (112). In the end, Henry and Helen have reconciled.

For her to act as the intermediary and connecting link between old and new traditions and values, Margaret needs to be relatable to both the liberal and conventional classes. As stated, Forster constructs parallels between Margaret and Ruth Wilcox. The stark parallel between Margaret and Ruth Wilcox is indisputable in scenes where Margaret stop situations from growing into quarrels between the three families. Whereas Ruth Wilcox refuses to give up her ideals and values, Margaret is more open to understanding others. This marks the significant difference between the two Mrs Wilcoxes: Ruth failed in uniting families, but Margaret succeeded to some extent. For England to survive, values and ideals need to be reconsidered and challenged. Ruth Wilcox who failed to see the connection died, thus symbolically marking the death of the Victorian tradition, whereas Margaret accepts changes and can connect with others.

Money plays a large part in the novel and is a crucial feature that distinguishes the three families. The Schlegels take money for granted, but both Helen and Margaret go through epiphanies in the story: Margaret realises that money is important, and it allows her to live as she pleases. In contrast, Helen gets anxious because of the Basts' lack of money and attempts to solve their financial problems through the Wilcoxes. Ironically, Helen reinvests the money the Basts refuse and she becomes even richer than before and Margaret marries Henry, which means that she too is better off financially than before. The only family losing money are the Basts. The growing financial divisions between the classes presents the underlying conclusion of the novel that both Leonard Bast and Henry Wilcox have implied. As Henry argues:

> 'There always have been rich and poor. I'm no fatalist. Heaven forbid! But our civilization is moulded by great impersonal forces' (his voice grew complacent; it always did when he eliminated the personal), 'and there always

> will be rich and poor. You can't deny it' (and now it was a respectful voice) – 'and you can't deny that, in spite of all, the tendency of civilization has on the whole been upward.' (193)

Margaret corroborates Henry Wilcox's view in convincing Helen not to meddle with the Basts. Helen cannot, or refuses to, fathom how important money is and how Leonard, who only possesses one broken umbrella is excluded from society. Helen rejects Henry's claim of there being the rich and the poor. Margaret tries to reason with Helen and tries to convince her to let the Basts be: "The imagination ought to play upon money and realize it vividly, for it's the – the second most important thing in the world … Money: give Mr. Bast money, and don't bother about his ideals. He'll pick up those for himself" (134). Margaret has come to the same conclusion as Leonard and Henry: money is the crucial feature in determining a person's social hierarchy.

In marrying Henry, Margaret learns little by little the ways of the Wilcox family and she learns to see their world view and their narrow-mindedness. The novel depicts Margaret's hopes to change Henry or at least to make him see a broader world view that encompasses more than money and property: "she connected… and she hoped that some day Henry would do the same" (207). Henry Wilcox is set in his traditions and values and refuses to accept Margaret's liberal views. Margaret's frustration as both a liberal and realist appears in her trying to make sense of her sister's views on the Wilcoxes: "How dare Schlegels despise Wilcoxes, when it takes all sorts to make a world" (112). Margaret needs to reject her liberal views to some extent in order to accept the Wilcoxes' values of power and property. Her realist views allow her to see the paradoxical values within the liberal tradition and accept other traditions. This is substantiated when Margaret finds out that Henry and his sons had burned the letter in which Ruth Wilcox had stated her wish to give Margaret Howards End. Margaret is not angry, since she has learned to understand the Wilcoxes' values and ideas that she cannot put it against them. Margaret is the only character to understand the co-existence and to some extent separate distinctions between the classes. However, Margaret's ultimate realisation that she cannot make Henry see her values and ideas is evident: "there was one quality in Henry for which she was never prepared, however much she reminded herself of it: his obtuseness. He simply did not notice things, and there was no more to be said" (Forster 188).

3. Forster's England

In this section of my study I explain how Forster uses symbolism and imagery to further contrast cultures and ideals and values. I establish how London and the English countryside are symbolic representations of the new and old world and how these are contrasted in Forster's description of both. Property and inheritance are crucial features in the novel as it negotiates the ongoing changes within society and shows the clear differences within the middle class. Finally, I aim to show how the condition of England is connected to the fate of Howards End. The fate of England is in the hands of the one who ultimately inherits the country house. Thus, this chapter provides various outlooks on Forster's world view: how he viewed the fate of England, the English people and the need for society to adapt to the changing world.

Michael Levenson studies how symbolism and liberalism belong to "such different orders of description and such different strains of modernity" (78) and how these two terms function in *Howards End*. He explains how fiction is a crucial feature of the realist novel to understand underlying social realities. Forster uses fictional features, by the use of symbolism, within social contexts to highlight the paradigms within modernity and as an extension the inherent qualities within the English middle class. Therefore, it is important to study how Forster's own ideology permeates through the narrative and how he builds an image of England and its people on his conditions. Also, symbolic values and features are presented throughout in different contexts and are discussed in tandem with the different topics.

3.1. Symbolism, art and culture

Symbolism, imagery, art and culture play a vital role in Forster's depiction of England in the early twentieth century. Through cultural references Forster's novel contains Germanic mythology and old Greek myths, which Forster implicitly refers to throughout the novel. Kevin Dettmar claims that when Forster was travelling in Italy and Greece he found inspiration in the Mediterranean beauty and passion. Forster uses imagery of water as a symbol for a struggling society and the wych-elm to construct a symbol of stability and old values. Forster's use of imagery and symbolism shows the depth and complex narrative and it allows the novel to be close-read with several focal points so as to understand the condition of England that he portrays.

The concert scene at the beginning of the novel is a crucial scene, since it introduces the characters to one another and plays heavily with symbolism. It takes place at a concert hall, where both the Schlegel family and Leonard Bast are listening to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. This scene marks the start of misunderstandings between the families. Widdowson aptly notes the irony of the scene where culture both brings classes together and separates them (129). Here, culture brings the classes together, but in the larger scenario culture is what separates the higher from the lower-middle classes, despite Leonard's diligent efforts to the contrary. Leonard desperately wants to appear cultured, a man of art and literature, but the Schlegels who live and breathe culture see through him: "His brain is filled with the husks of books, culture – horrible; we want him to wash out his brain and go to the real thing. We want to show him how he may get upsides with life" (150). Leonard is at the concert under false pretences, since he is only attending because he wants to appear cultured.

In contrast to Leonard, there is Helen who is deeply immersed in the symphony and while listening to its Allegro movement, she becomes almost hysterical. In her discussion of the importance of music in Forster's works, Andrea Weatherhead draws parallels with the mythical God Pan and music in Forster's works, in this case Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. She explains the complementary roles of Pan and music: in Forster's earlier works, when Pan appears, he appears as a symbol for human passion, which is also the case when music appears in Forster's stories (247). Whitehead explains how Pan appears as a symbol rather than a mythical god in *Howards End*: "Pan's spirit, rather than the actual god himself, haunts the accessible realms of Beethoven's music to symbolise awakening passion in the characters" (248). This it certainly does, Helen's passionate response while listening to the concert is striking:

> '… look out for the part where you think you have done with the goblins and they come back,' breathed Helen, as the music started with a goblin walking quietly over the universe, from end to end. Others followed him. They were not aggressive creatures; it was that that made them so terrible to Helen. They merely observed in passing that there was no such thing as splendour or heroism in the world. After the interlude of elephants dancing, they returned and made the observation for the second time. Helen could not contradict them, for, once at all events, she had felt the same, and had seen the reliable walls of youth collapse. Panic and emptiness! Panic and emptiness! The goblins were right. (46)

The myth of Pan and its connections to this scene continues with the reference to shipwrecks and mythical creatures. In the tale of Pan, a shipwreck is the main incident and heroes and goblins represent fear and cowardice. The fact that goblins come across as cowards fits well with Helen's exclamation of panic and emptiness, because she uses the same words when describing Paul's fear to admit to his family his engagement to Helen.

Cupids and goblins have a symbolic meaning in the above passage. The goblins and cupids quarrel and do not see eye to eye. The non-aggressive creatures whom others follow would point out to the Wilcoxes and those who share their ideas and values. They are the logical thinkers who do not believe in splendour and heroism: the Wilcoxes survive and neglect aesthetic beauty in the world and their surroundings. When Helen first observes and gets to know the Wilcoxes, she abandons all her ideas because they are fascinating to her and she comes to the same conclusion here and she realises that the Wilcoxes are different from her and their philosophy makes sense despite her renouncing it.

In order to further strengthen the connection between Pan, music and Forster Whitehead explains the myth of Pan, who rejects social structure and who is associated with music and emotions. This can be fittingly applied to *Howards End* where culture and Beethoven's symphony become both the connecting and the alienating link between Leonard and the Schlegels. Also, Trilling considers the role of art in Forster's writing where art plays a vital role in modernist writing. In modernist writing art is depicted as uniquely valuable and allows a freedom of imagination. In the nineteenth century, art was raised to the level of religion, and Helen takes this to another level when she is consumed by the Beethoven's symphony (Trilling 53). In *Howards End* Forster uses art not only to unite and contrast characters but also to emphasise the exaggerated liberal view of art as almost sacred and holy (that is, to the level of religion). Helen's exaggerated reaction to the concert and Leonard's obsession with learning art are both suitable examples of how Forster uses art in an ironic way to portray the liberal tradition and values. Furthermore, Helen's psychological state and hysterical reaction to music resembles that of Stendhal's syndrome. According to Hélio Teive, Stendhal's syndrome is precisely what Helen experienced: "Stendhal's syndrome is considered to be a rare psychiatric syndrome characterized by transient anxiety and affective and thought disturbances when a person is exposed to a work of art" (296). Helen's thoughts that jump from one thing to another in a matter of seconds and become hysterical by music apply to the characteristics of Stendhal's syndrome. Margaret mentions in passing that this

always happens to Helen when she is at a concert, meaning it is recurrent and strengthens her neurological condition.

Right next to Howards End there is a large wych-elm that is “leaning a little over the house, and standing on the boundary between the garden and meadow” (19). The wych-elm has strong symbolic value in the novel and is referred to repeatedly. The tree has value in both its representation of nature as well as features of the celestial and spiritual. The dual purpose of the tree is another example of Forster’s complex style of depicting the condition of England. From the beginning, Helen describes the house and the tree as beautiful and not what she had expected from the Wilcoxes’ residence. Forster explains this later on by connecting the house with Ruth Wilcox, since she is the one who owns the house and sees its aesthetic and sentimental value. Ruth Wilcox is described as being one with the house and the tree and Margaret describes how London lacks the natural surroundings that Howards End has. Thus, the tree represents nature as well as stability by its deep roots in the English ground. The tree is a symbol for the survival of England and represents the crucial connection between human and nature.

Medalie explains the mythological features Forster gives to the tree with its talismanic pigs’ teeth embedded in the bark. Ruth Wilcox describes to Margaret how the country people put them there and how the bark has healing powers and could cure anything. Ruth Wilcox becomes the defining link between the natural and the spiritual. The tree is a part of her and the tree represents the survival Ruth Wilcox fought for. The tree is very old and has survived for generations. However, the crucial point is that Ruth Wilcox explains how the tree could once cure everything. Thus, Forster describes the natural beauty and the threating future of the countryside and England through the depiction of the wych-elm.

Forster uses Howards End and the scenery to depict the beautiful, even transcendent aspect of the English rural country. Forster grew up in the countryside and has strong appreciation for it, which explains how Forster portrays the English countryside by poetic language and descriptions: “the boundary hedge zigzagged down the hill at right angles, and at the bottom there was a little green annex – a sort of powdercloset for the cows” (268). In the countryside the spiritual and the divine can thrive. Forster establishes the spirituality and divinity of Howards End and the English countryside by the fact that the dead Ruth Wilcox sees the house as a spirit. Through her, Forster questions the fate of the house: “Is it credible that the possessions of the spirit can be bequeathed at all? Has the soul offspring?” (107).

Forster offers neither hope nor definite loss, since he questions the survival of the countryside, the house and tree. If there is an heir, he sees possibility in the survival of the spiritual. In this way, Forster maintains the vital connection that humans need to retain to earth and nature. Margaret, who believes in the spiritual and in the beauty of the countryside, stands for the hope of survival of both the house and the tree.

While the house ultimately survives and has an heir, Forster establishes an uncertainty that looms over England and strengthens the instability of the condition of England. By representing nature, the wych-elm becomes a symbol for the survival of England:

> July would follow with the little red poppies among the wheat, August with the cutting of the wheat. These little events would become part of her, year after year. Every summer she would fear lest the well should give out, every winter lest the pipes would freeze; every westerly gale might blow the wych-elm down and bring the end of all things. (325-326)

Margaret is aware of the instability and the uncertainty of what is to come, and Forster's prescient vision is emphasised in these depictions of nature and the countryside. The earthly and beautiful simply cannot survive in the hands of the Wilcoxes. Henry Wilcox built a garage under the wych-elm, but Margaret saw the value and beauty in the tree and she is able to keep it alive and standing. Forster uses Margaret to establish the present condition of England through the imagery of the house and the tree: "Their message was not of eternity, but of hope on this side of the grave" (206). The fate of the house and the tree echoes the struggles Forster foresaw, he offers no permanent and definite solution. Rather, he finds a middle ground and hopes it will grow steadier and stronger like the roots of the wych-elm.

In other words, the wych-elm represents the English as much as the house does. Margaret describes how the house and the tree have a kind of comradeship. Forster suggests a solution to the survival of England through the value and spiritual power of the tree: "It was neither warrior, nor lover, nor god; in none of these roles do the English excel. It was a comrade, bending over the house" (206). As Barbara Morden states, the connection between the house and the tree represents "a harmonious view both literal and metaphorical that is quintessentially 'English'". Even if the tree casts a shadow on the house, it does not overshadow it completely. Thus, they are connected and can live in harmony without one overpowering the other. In the end, the three families have found peace and live together in the country house. Though the country house has signs of modernity with its garage and the

Wilcox touch, it remains standing. The tree survives and is still growing between the house and the meadow. Thus, the quote about the connection between the tree and the house is another allusion to the connection between human and nature, earth and celestial and ultimately, the connection between the three families.

In sum, the wych-elm has a symbolic value that Forster uses to question the survival of England. Forster's love for the yeoman class and the countryside shows in his depiction of the countryside and how Ruth Wilcox is connected to it. The spirit of Ruth Wilcox is rooted in England and cannot be removed by building garages and bringing the industrial era to rural England. Margaret, on the other hand, has the same values as Forster. To them the tree and English countryside are beautiful and have a spiritual life of their own: "It was English, and the wych-elm that she saw from the window was an English tree. No report had prepared her for its peculiar glory" (206). Forster's romantic style of writing is evident in the descriptions of nature and rural England. In contrast, he also threatens that which he loves and balances between the new and old traditions and challenges the survival of the old. Furthermore, Ruth Wilcox recognises the instability of England and the threat London represents to the countryside, which establishes the connection between the Wilcox matriarch, the house and the tree on the one hand and the condition of England on the other.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this subchapter, the sea and water in general play a vital role in the novel by alluding to instability and the condition of England, a society in turmoil. The sea and waves are constantly present in the novel through metaphors and in descriptions of situations and conditions. Forster uses the traditional symbolic meaning of the sea as representing change and uncertainty. He depicts the looming fate of England through images of the sea:

> One had the sense of a backwater or rather of an estuary, whose waters flowed in from the invisible sea, ebbed into a profound silence while the waves without were still beating. Though the promontory consisted of flats … it fulfilled its purpose, and gained for the older houses opposite a certain measure of peace. These, too, would be swept away in time, and another promontory would arise upon their site, as humanity piled itself higher and higher on the precious soil of London. (23)

Here, Forster describes Wickham Place, the London residence of the Schlegel siblings. Forster describes London apartments and how they are taking over London suburbs and

threatening the English countryside that "would be swept away in time". Wickham Place is still outside the main streets of London and it is not completely surrounded by tall apartment buildings. However, Forster strongly suggests that this will not last and the hectic centre of London will grow, and urbanisation will reach its peak. The waters flowing suggest that Wickham Place is changing and will ultimately be swept away. The older houses opposite the city apartment are still old with no chance of survival as the tides draw nearer. For now, Wickham Place is a symbolic promontory of the old and the new: it may hinder the growth of London, but it only slows down the inevitable. Forster cleverly uses Wickham Place and London in terms of water and soil to symbolise the changing society and what is to come.

Medalie connects the above quote with the modernist critical description of overpopulation and urbanisation (8). Forster certainly recognised London as the source of modern times and ideas and values that started spreading to the English suburbs. The soil of London is changing, and this is connected to the wych-elm that has deep roots in the ground. London is constructed by houses whereas the wych-elm has been standing there through generations and represents stability. Forster also mentions the soil of England when describing the garden at Howards End: Margaret "was struck by the fertility of the soil; she had seldom been in a garden where the flowers looked so well" (200). The waters that are reaching London have yet to reach Howards End and Forster depicts the garden that thrives without the changing tides.

England is the symbolic island and new values and ideas start penetrating it like the sea and its waves. Thus, as Medalie explains, "[t]he threat to English tradition is made more desperate by presenting it as a threat to the island itself" (8). Margaret, the intermediary between the old and new values, appreciates old values but understands the progressive movement towards modern times. She sees London as the core for these changes: "this continual flux of London. It is an epitome of us at our worst – eternal formlessness; all the qualities, good, bad and indifferent, streaming away – streaming, streaming for ever" (184). London threatens the beauty of what London once was and what the countryside still is. She is afraid that modern streams threaten the characteristics of the English, both the good and the bad qualities. Margaret seems to be concerned with England becoming impersonal and art and culture eventually dying away.

In this way, water imagery represents the fact that old Victorian values are threatened by modern times. This is also depicted in the death of Ruth Wilcox. Forster portrays her

passing away as the death of old values through images of the water and ripples: “The ripple had left no traces behind; the wave had strewn at her feet fragments torn from the unknown. A curious seeker stood for a while at the verge of the sea that tells so little, but tells a little, and watched the outgoing of this last tremendous tide” (110). Margaret, the curious seeker, sees Ruth Wilcox, the ripple, as the last of the old values, and now in Ruth’s death old values are dying out, leaving little or no trace behind, just like a ripple. Margaret is described as witnessing this and she recognises that none of the remaining Wilcoxes have hope of being the pillars of old values.

Images of water, specifically images of islands and the sea, are also used to construct a symbolic representation of the division between classes. Margaret “had never forgotten to discount the gold islets that raised them from the sea” shows that she is aware of her family’s privileged financial stability (302). Forster contrasts the lower classes as below the sea while Margaret and others in the upper class are above the sea on islands: “we are standing on these islands, and … most of the others are down below the surface of the sea” (72). Those below the sea, the Basts, are beneath the superstructures of wealth and Margaret recognises how the wealthy are not aware or refuse to acknowledge of the troubles below the sea. Medalie explains that the metaphor of islands is a trope within Edwardian literature (10). Forster uses the Edwardian literary style to enhance the social quandaries between those below and above the sea. Furthermore, Medalie explains that the country house is often used in Edwardian literature as a place of sanctuary and connects it with islands, where country houses are islands within islands. Thus, Howards End becomes an island within the larger island and offers sanctuary to the classless child of Helen and Leonard. In Howards End “the air was tranquil now” suggesting that the waves and the changing tides have calmed and the troubles of the sea cannot reach the island that is Howards End (326).

As presented in the discussion on Beethoven’s fifth, art plays a significant symbolic role in the novel and art is of course part of the liberal culture. Forster describes music as “the deepest of the arts and deep beneath the arts” (qtd in Trilling 131). Forster’s passion for music is evident through the omniscient narrator in the novel and in his portrayal of the Schlegels. Tibby absorbs culture and art in abundance, whereas Helen becomes passionate and Margaret enjoys books and music in moderation. Chapter Five, the scene at the concert hall, starts with: “It will be generally admitted that Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony is the most sublime noise that has ever penetrated into the ear of man. All sorts and conditions are satisfied by it” (44). The liberal crisis becomes apparent in the above quote: David Deutsch

explains that the ironic oxymoron of sublime noise is Forster's way of depicting the liberal crisis in the twentieth century (165). Liberals love art, but some see it as mere noise, while others have strong euphoric experiences. In describing the emotions and reactions of several of the main characters, Forster recognises that the pure aesthetic and almost euphoric delight that art used to bring the liberal mind is now reduced to mere noise. However, even with only tapping feet or nodding to the music, it is still sublime, and the liberal imagination and value persist, since liberals after all love culture and art.

David Medalie establishes the meaning of culture in *Howards End* in that it "represent[s] a late-Victorian tendency to see culture in socially progressivist terms" (46). Similarly, Deutsch claims "[l]iberal policies, particularly with regards to education, had hoped that art and culture could be both morally enlightening and bring disparate classes together" (164). Leonard desperately tries to educate himself on all cultural things but does so to no avail. Leonard's doom is pre-written and culture, which is meant to bring people together, becomes the thing that Leonard cannot connect with no matter how hard he tries. Margaret recognises the pitfall of culture:

> Culture had worked in her own case, but during the last few weeks she had doubted whether it humanized the majority, so wide and so widening is the gulf that stretches between the natural and the philosophic man, so many the good chaps who are wrecked in trying to cross it. She knew this type very well – the vague aspirations, the mental dishonesty, the familiarity with the outsides of books. (122-123)

Forster uses culture to anticipate the future and to how men and women have to accept their given destinies. Forster emphasises the gap between the middle classes and how it might humanise liberals. Still, people like Leonard, who cannot properly enjoy culture, become its victims and are wrecked in trying to save themselves as the outcasts of the cultural and intellectual world. While culture brings different kinds of people together, it can also show how different they are. For Leonard culture is learnt and gives opportunities and for the Schlegels culture is felt and valued. The mental dishonesty that Margaret points out is what she sees in Leonard and is the flaw that separates Leonard and the Schlegels.

In sum, Forster's use of symbolism and imagery shows his intellectual background and his interest in ancient mythology. The concert scene is in several aspects an important scene in order to understand the underlying symbolism and meaning behind the scene.

Levenson argues that the scene is a reflection of the wider theme of the novel: it unites and alienates "diverse sorts and sundry conditions" and it provides a basis for Forster's understanding of the difficulty of connecting people and cultures (81). Forster uses culture and art to contrast the experiences between the different classes and shows how art is felt rather than taught. Through Leonard and his obsession with culture, Forster develops a symbolic bridge between him and the Schlegels as his cultural experiences are to no avail and he cannot learn to be cultured. Symbolism of water and the wych-elm are symbolic constructions of depicting the struggles of class structures. The water represents uncertainty and the waves bring modernity and threaten the island which represents old values. Howards end becomes an island within the island of England, and in the country house, class is inconsequential and peace, however temporary, is found within. Furthermore, at the end of the novel, the waves have calmed but Forster paints a picture that suggests that it is a calm before another storm.

3.2 Setting and ideology

> The city seemed satanic, the narrower streets oppressing like the galleries of a mine. No harm was done by the fog to trade, for it lay high, and the lighted windows of the shops were thronged with customers. It was rather a darkening of the spirit which fell back upon itself, to find a more grievous darkness within. (94)

> Down by the dell-hole more vivid colours were awakening, and Lent lilies stood sentinel on its margin, or advanced in battalions over the grass. Tulips were a tray of jewels. She could not see the wych-elm tree, but a branch of the celebrated vine, studded with velvet knobs had covered the perch. (200)

As can be seen from the above quotes, Forster contrasts London city life with rural England through vivid imagery and detailed descriptions of both settings. These depictions are crucial in understanding the condition of English society that Forster witnessed at the turn of the century. The imagery used in describing rural and city life have a different function in this chapter than in the previous: here I focus on how it reflects on the values that Forster held. Forster's own values and ideals are apparent in his depictions of the settings and he often uses Margaret's perceptions to contrast the images of city life to rural life. Forster's characterisation of the surroundings and places have dual purposes. In this section, I discuss

these dual roles and the ideology that forms in *Howards End.* Furthermore, Forster uses poetic language to describe rural England and symbolic values and references are inevitable and are mentioned in this part of the analysis as well.

Early twentieth-century London is vibrant and full of life. The Industrial Revolution shows its marks on the city and the people look for opportunities in the growing city. David Medalie explains that many modernist writers, such as Forster, Joseph Conrad and T.S. Eliot, describe London "as the locus of overweening modernity" (10). London's dominance over rural country life marks the modernist shift towards urbanisation. Forster's depiction of London certainly applies to this and it is shown throughout the novel:

> Certainly London fascinates. One visualizes it as a tract of quivering grey, intelligent without purpose, and excitable without love; as a spirit that has altered before it can be chronicled; as a heart that certainly beats, but with no pulsation of humanity. It lies beyond everything: Nature, with all her cruelty, comes nearer to us than do these crowds of men. (116)

Here, Forster expresses the frustrating life on the streets of London as confining, with no opportunities for spiritual and emotional growth. Nature, beauty and emotion have no place in London and the imperialists that rule the cities lack values and ideas. The Wilcoxes are those who made London what it is: money and power are what matters in the capital city, thus suffocating the liberal and artistic tradition and value. Widdowson claims that Forster saw London and the English countryside as a conflict between the new life and the old (21). Similarly, Medalie explains the threat that London and city life stands for as against old values. He portrays how Forster uses the characterisation of London for this purpose, in order to show how old life and values disappear and are replaced by new ones. The struggling balance of the new and old life is what characterises the transition from Victorian tradition to the new modern industrialised world. Therefore, the characterisation of London and its dusty and grey streets symbolise the threat to old values that Forster cherished.

The Wilcoxes have brought the mentality of London city life to Howards End. Ruth Wilcox explains that no discussion ever occurs in Howards End and Margaret exclaims that "discussion keeps a house alive! It cannot stand on bricks and mortars alone", to which Ruth Wilcox responds "It cannot stand without them" (87). She acknowledges that her husband's money has saved Howards End by paying for the maintenance of the house. However, she also recognises the sacrifice where Howards End has become merely a piece of property.

This also shows the threat of urbanisation that extends to the countryside of England: "[T]he city herself, emblematic of [the Schlegels'] lives, rose and fell in a continual flux, while her shallows washed more widely against the hills of Surrey and over the fields of Hertfordshire" (115). Urban lifestyle of cars and modern houses are being planned and built in the countryside by people like the Wilcoxes.

In contrasts to the grey and dull London, the English countryside is described as magical and poetic: "Quiet mysteries were in progress behind those tossing horizons: the west, as ever, was retreating with some secret which may not be worth the discovery, but which no practical man will ever discover" (210). Forster also uses sea imagery to depict the liveliness and beauty of rural England: "England was alive, throbbing through all her estuaries, crying for joy through the mouths of all her gulls, and the north wind, with contrary motion, blew stronger against her rising seas" (178). Once again, Forster reminds his readers that the Wilcoxes will never understand the beauty and sentimental value of the English countryside. Ruth Wilcox, who was brought up on the countryside saw and appreciated the beauty of rural England. When she notices that Margaret shares her values in the beauty of English countryside, she wants to save Howards End from her family and give it to someone who would appreciate the household for the same reasons as she does. Margaret shows interest in what might seem trivial to some, the wych-elm that Helen had described "as a very splendid tree" (83). Ruth Wilcox responds with similar sentiments by calling it the "finest wych-elm in Hertfordshire" (82).

It is Margaret who comes in as the intermediary of acknowledging the value in both urban and rural places:

> To speak against London is no longer fashionable. The earth as an artistic cult has had its day, and the literature of the near future will probably ignore the country and seek inspiration from the town. One can understand the reaction. Of Pan and the elemental forces the public has heard a little too much – they seem Victorian, while London is Georgian – and those who care for the earth with sincerity may wait long ere the pendulum swings back to her again. (116)

At this point, London has become the centre for artistic inspiration and the countryside is deemed old-fashioned and forgotten. Therefore, Margaret accepts that London is the new centre for inspiration and opportunities. Also, Forster's voice seems to intrude in this passage on the future of culture and life in a society that is changing and evidently continues to do so.

The omniscient narrative voice adds to the uncertainty of the condition of England, as it is not only Margaret and the characters who are worried about the future. The people have heard "a little too much" of the rural life of England and are ready for something new that London can provide. London represents new opportunities, but Forster maintains a critical stance, questions these opportunities and hopes that the old will not be entirely forgotten.

Regina Martin discusses the public's interest in London and the rising finance capitalism in England. She claims that the Victorian style of writing dominated Forster's writing, but adds that Forster recognised the driving global forces of the modernist tradition and combined these styles in his characterisations of London and the countryside (448). Thus, London becomes the centre for finance capitalism with its dusty and grey streets, whereas the romantic and picturesque descriptions belong to the countryside. Through the representations of the urban and rural life, Forster balances between the Victorian tradition and modernist literary style. Thus, Forster does not completely reject the modern world that he seems to criticise. Rather, he questions both traditions and tries to find a middle ground and connect life in London and life in Howards End.

London offers "the gates to the glorious and the unknown" and "Through [the gates] we pass out into adventure and sunshine, to them, alas! We return" (27). Forster connects the train station in London to the adventures of beauty and adventure found outside. In this case, the train station becomes the connection between the new and the old England, thus not completely dismissing London as the bleak future that seems to be ahead. Not only does Forster imply the opportunities and advantages of London city life, he is also aware that rural England as it was would not survive modern times. Upon her visit to Howards End, Margaret wonders why England has not been recognised for all its beauty:

> Why has not England a great mythology? Our folklore has never advanced beyond daintiness, and the greater melodies about our countryside have all issued through the pipes of Greece. Deep and true as the native imagination can be, it seems to have failed there. It has stopped with the witches and fairies. It cannot vivify one fraction of a summer field or give names to half a dozen stars. England still waits for the supreme moment of her literature – for the great poet who shall voice her, or, better still, for the thousand little poets whose voices shall pass into our common talk. (262)

Forster questions the power of England's nature and thinks that it may not be enough. Rural England is lacking something in order to obtain its "supreme moment of her literature". At this point in the novel, Margaret is already familiar with the Wilcox way of life and understands their value and necessity in society. What can be gleaned from the above quote is that Margaret realises that if England stays as it was, it will not flourish. Therefore, it needs to progress and embrace new opportunities and adapt to changing times. Also, in the above quote Forster's interest in mythology is established and he questions why England does not have its own mythology. He establishes the merits for the aesthetic beauty of England but adds that England has not reached its full potential. He refers to small poets and writers of his time and suggests that in the era of the modernist literary boom, new spectrums and possibilities open. It seems that Forster includes himself with the writers who are shaping society.

In conclusion, despite the stark differences in the depiction of rural and urban life, Forster plays with imagery and ideology to accept the importance of both new and old values. Ruth Wilcox sees Margaret as the saviour of Howards End and Margaret comes to the realisation that these new and old traditions need to be brought together in order to survive and not extinguish the one or the other. Forster hopes that the finance capitalists, such as the Wilcoxes, will not trample and destroy the countryside and Margaret symbolises the hope that there may be a way for both ideals and values to co-exist.

3.3. "Who shall inherit England?": Property and inheritance

According to Allan Hepburn, in Victorian tradition inheritance is hereditary, whereas in modernist tradition people choose who receives the inheritance (7). Forster uses the death of Ruth Wilcox to contrast the two traditions: In her final months, she has decided to give Margaret Howards End, but the Wilcox family are too set in their ways to see their property go to someone else. They dismiss the letter written by the late Ruth Wilcox as legally unbinding, since she wrote it during her illness. Charles is blunt in his wishes not to give Margaret Howards End because of her heritage and cosmopolitan world view: "I cannot stand them, and a German cosmopolitan is the limit" (Forster 110). Charles's strong conventional values are contrasted with his dislike of the more open-minded and liberal part of the middle class. Their German background also threatens the archetypical English culture and society that the Wilcoxes represent. The Wilcoxes see foreign forces as threatening to the English

and Henry Wilcox accidentally almost admits to Margaret that the Germans are threatening England. Whereas Charles was direct in his sentiments, Forster throws some doubt on Henry Wilcox, who realises that such sentiments would only hurt Margaret if she heard them.

At the end of the novel, Forster is even more forthright about the clashing of the middle class in terms of property and inheritance, as the Schlegels furniture end up in storage at Howards End. Still, Henry Wilcox refuses to let Helen move into Howards End, Charles kills Leonard at Howards End and Howards End will ultimately be inherited by Helen and Leonard's child. As agreed, Margaret inherits Howards End, but she gets no money, since when Henry Wilcox dies, the money goes to his children. As capitalists, the children accept this, since they are more concerned with having money and have no sentimental value in the property. Thus, Howards End is a link that at first strongly contrasts and separates classes, but which ultimately becomes the unifying link of how to share England.

Richard Russell discusses *Howards End* and Forster's style of writing by including things as a symbolic form of memory and property in relation to the position of families in society and their respective values and ideals (206-209). The Wilcoxes are not sentimental about property but values it as investment. Howards End was inherited by the Wilcox family and Ruth Wilcox is aware of her own immediate family's indifference and therefore decides to give Howards End to Margaret.

Thus, the Wilcoxes view houses and property only as commodities, and Margaret recognises the indifference Henry has to their aesthetic and sentimental value. Margaret sees the Wilcoxes as "[o]nce past the rocks of emotion" and acknowledges that their value in society is that of money and power (111). This is in parallel with how Forster describes the Wilcoxes' residence through Margaret:

> The room suggested men, and Margaret, keen to derive the modern capitalist from the warriors and hunters of the past, saw it as an ancient guest-hall, where the lord sat at meat among his thanes. Even the Bible – the Dutch Bible that Charles had brought back from the Boer War – fell into position. Such a room admitted loot. (167)

Margaret observes the grandness of the Wilcox way of life. She recognises the old tradition that has survived due to the Wilcoxes. Forster mentions Charles fighting in the Boer war, which further emphasises how the Wilcoxes have shaped England by protecting it in times of war. Forster stresses the old values of England with Lords and capitalist men, by suggesting

that men rule the world and make the decisions. Henry Wilcox is regarded as part of the powerful men who rule England and its people. As Fredrick Crews notes, the Wilcoxes are "symptomatic of the late-nineteenth-century consolidation of the monied classes (landowners and industrialists together)" (107). The monied class that the Wilcoxes represent is evident in the furnishings and interior of their residences. The Wilcoxes' properties lack the personal, the only observations are that of history and power. In the ownership of the Wilcoxes, Howards End is left rented out for profit and later used as storage. They bring the industrialised world to Howards End and their city apartments show power and history. Furthermore, their lack of understanding towards aesthetic beauty and sentimental value is apparent, since the Wilcox men do not share the sentimental value of Howards End as Ruth Wilcox and Margaret.

The Wilcox men are set in their ways and only think logically. Margaret ponders on the differences in values and ideas among the English middle classes. When she visits Howards End and walks through the town, Margaret's thoughts go to philosophical questions: "In these English farms, if anywhere, one might see life steadily and see it whole, group in one vision its transitoriness and its eternal youth, connect – connect without bitterness until all men are brothers" (264). Russell maintains that the Wilcoxes represent those who view life "steadily" and the Schlegels are those who see it "whole" (200). This quote is linked to the larger theme of the novel: people who see things as they are (property) as against people who see its beauty and sentimental value. Margaret is the one who most strongly tries to establish a connection rather than viewing things single-mindedly. Also, the quote echoes the condition of England that struggles to find a connection between people amid so many differences and clashing opinions.

Russell suggests that the marriage between Margaret and Henry and the new ownership of Howards End points to the future of England: "The novel is centrally concerned with how cultural things gathered into particular places might lead to a hybrid community composed of humans as different as the feminist Helen and the patriarchal Mr. Wilcox" (200). The fate of England does not depend on a single person or class but depends on a co-dependence of the people of England. Thus, the only way for England and in extension Howards End to survive, is in the future inheritor and child of Helen and Leonard.

Throughout the novel, Forster challenges and questions who the real inheritor of England should be: it starts with the Wilcoxes, whose lack of sentimentality and narrow-minded focus on money and power is in contradiction with the rising modern world. Forster

shows this by initially denying Margaret the ownership of Howards End. However, when Margaret marries Henry Wilcox, Forster seems to re-consider the idea of the fate of Howards End: Can Margaret change the values and ideas of Henry and what will become of Howards End if Margaret inherits it? Margaret considers her options and tries to convince Henry to give Howards End to Helen. Later, Margaret realises that Henry is not ready to let go, his character as landowner and a businessman does not allow him to give up the property. However, when Charles kills Leonard and Helen has to bring up her child alone, Henry Wilcox realises that England and its people can change and that such a change might not be to the detriment of his ideas and values. Thus, he agrees to give Howards End to Margaret who in turn decides that Helen's child will inherit it from her.

Crews raises an interesting additional aspect of the fate of Howards End and of how time has opened possibilities within the middle class. He suggests that Leonard Bast stands for the "worst effects of modern capitalism", in the sense that the Schlegels encourage Leonard to seek a better life that only creates dissatisfaction in Leonard and in his position (Crews 118). Thus, Leonard has little chances of gaining recognition in society. Forster ironically points to the fate of Leonard and his son (already suggested in his name Bast): Leonard, born a bastard, learns and accepts his place in society as unequal to those with money. However, his son (also born out of wedlock) enters a new world and ultimately inherits Howards End. The child will also live with Margaret and Henry Wilcox, thus suggesting that he will have a comfortable life, or at least more comfortable than Leonard did. Therefore, the possibilities that were denied of Leonard are now given to his son and the possibilities of a united England are thus established.

Crews explains Forster's ironic depiction of how the urban Schlegels are mostly stuck in London, whereas the Wilcoxes, whose values and money lie in large cities, own country estates and are part of the "landowning aristocracy" (109). The Wilcoxes are impervious to the liberals worries of destroying rural England and cannot observe and recognise the aesthetic beauty and sentimental value of the suburbs. The Schlegels value aesthetic beauty and see the beauty of Howards End that Ruth Wilcox recognised but her family fail to see. However, as Margaret comes to realise, the liberals need money and property to live the way they like, so she realises that the values that Helen despises are also part of their own values. Therefore, the Schlegels are already part of both the new and old world as they depend on old money to live freely in the new world.

Forster uses Ruth Wilcox as a posthumous symbol for hope and possibilities. He lets Margaret voice the symbolical value of Ruth Wilcox and her inheritance (both economic and spiritual):

> I feel that you and I and Henry are only fragments of that woman's mind. She knows everything. She is everything. She is the house, and the tree that leans over it. People have their own deaths as well as their own lives, and even if there is nothing beyond death, we shall differ in our nothingness. I cannot believe that knowledge such as hers will perish with knowledge such as mine. She knew about realities. (305-306)

Forster connects Ruth Wilcox with Howards End, and the persistence of old values. The house and the wych-elm are England and Ruth is part of the soil and ground that the house and tree stand on. Ruth Wilcox's role in the novel is that of a kind of inspirational deity to Margaret. Before Ruth's death, Margaret saw that they shared values and ideals and after her death Margaret finds comfort and guidance in her spirit. Margaret's affections for and forgiveness of Henry can be better understood through her faith in Ruth: Ruth Wilcox's affection for her husband is an affirmation to Margaret that Henry Wilcox is not the unreasonable imperialist that Helen sees. Thus, Margaret becomes more open to understanding and sympathising through the spiritual connection she has with Ruth Wilcox.

The above quote also raises the question of the survival of the Schlegels, or more broadly of the liberals and England. Margaret seems to point out that Ruth Wilcox was the key to the survival of England and that liberals need to change in order to survive. Ruth Wilcox is prescient in that she was the one who saw the future of England as a place where social and cultural ideals and values have to be blurred. Presumably, this is also why Ruth Wilcox wants Margaret to inherit Howards End: Margaret shares the same values with her and she believes that Margaret is the key to amalgamating the English middle class.

Ruth Wilcox's true values are revealed when she recognises and accepts the modern world, even though she acknowledges that she does not fit in the new world. Howards End will not survive in the hands of the Wilcoxes, therefore its survival lies in the Schlegels and Leonard and Helen's child. Also, this bridge between the old and the new is the ultimate theme and conclusion of the novel and brings together the epigraph to "Only connect" values, ideas and people for the survival of England. Similarly, Barbara Morden discusses the fate of Howards End by problematising the fate of England and Howards End. She explains that

while Forster attempts to construct a solution for the survival of England through the money of the Wilcoxes and the romantic aesthetic value of Margaret, this solution is only temporary. Throughout the book Forster includes the threat of the war, more so in the final chapters of the novel where "[L]ife's going to be melted down, all over the world" (329). Morden argues that because of the war and the uncertainties to come, the solution that Forster provides is not set and offers only temporary relief. Also, Forster acknowledges this through all of the characters, suggesting that it spans across social borders and everyone's fate is in the balance. Thus, whoever inherits England and Howards End is not final and will probably be challenged in times to come. As Forster describes the meadow and the limited view of the horizon, Helen points toward London that lies "over the meadow – over eight or nine meadows, but at the end of them was a red rust" (329). Possibilities are not endless, and the uncertain future slowly creeps towards them and Howards End and threatening the fate of England.

In conclusion, Forster considers the options for the future of England: "Does she belong to those who have moulded her and made her feared by other lands, or to those who have added nothing to her power, but have somehow seen her" (178). This again raises the question of who eventually inherits England, and the questions Forster asks can be applied to the fate of Howards End. Will Howards End be left to the Wilcoxes who only see it as a property or should it go to the rightful owner Margaret, who sees the spiritual and aesthetic value in the property? Forster ultimately offers a third option: Howards End is to be left to the classless son of Helen and Leonard. Neither the Wilcoxes or the Schlegels can inherit Howards End as it would be the doom of England. Therefore, Forster is forced to offer another option that explains the inherent struggle within the middle class and English society. This is a technique Forster uses throughout the novel: he questions the fate of the characters and Howards End in order to ponder on the fate of England.

3.4. Challenging liberalism and the English social hierarchy

Forster places the liberal Schlegel family as the centre and intermediary of the English middle class. However, he complicates and questions the liberal ideals, values and ideas of all three families. This chapter focuses on how Forster uses liberalism, social and cultural ideals and values to question the characters' world views. I discuss certain scenes and

themes in the novel in detail to show how Forster contrasts the characters values through moral realism.

Widdowson views *Howards End* as a "history within", in the sense that it is a history in its own time and place in its thematic structures and that its specific depiction of the social dilemmas of the Edwardian is a central theme (63). As I have noted, the liberal dilemma is a central theme in the novel. That is, how liberals struggled with balancing their liberal values while being dependent on the richer and enjoying financial freedom. In fact, Forster is not an unwavering liberal, that is, he writes in the liberal tradition but does so while undermining that tradition. The obvious way he portrays the complexity of his liberal views is evident in the way he criticises the Schlegel family's strong liberal views and ultimately suggests that Margaret is in fact a moral realist rather than a liberal. The moral realist style of writing is fit to describe the stylistic techniques Forster uses to challenge the liberal ideal. Ian Watt explains the realist style of writing as:

> a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under an obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the times and places of their actions, details which are presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms. (32)

Forster provides details of all the characters and their background and of how their social history have shaped the world that they exist in today. In this way, he emphasises the individuality of each character. The personalisation of each character is crucial to Forster's depiction of the condition of the English society. Since he attempts to establish the crisis within the middle class, he needs to portray the different values within it. Through the moral realist lens, Forster is able to establish the liberal dilemma and the crisis within the middle class by not situating himself too strongly on one side or the other.

Forster challenges traditions and values of the English people and does so in order to amalgamate England and its people. He uses Leonard Bast to explain the complexities of social ranking to Helen:

> 'You don't know what you're talking about,' he said. 'I shall never get work now. If rich people fail at one profession, they can try another. Not I. I had my groove, and I've got out of it. I could do one particular branch of insurance in one particular office well enough to command a salary, but that's all. Poetry's

> nothing, Miss Schlegel. One's thoughts about this and that are nothing. Your money, too, is nothing, if you'll understand me. I mean if a man over twenty once loses his own particular job, it's all over with him. I have seen it happen to others. Their friends gave them money for a little, but in the end they fall over the edge. It's no good. It's the whole world pulling. There will always be rich and poor.' (225-226)

What Helen and liberals in general fail to understand is that social hierarchy is deeply rooted in British society and it is impossible not to have social hierarchy. While Henry Wilcox and Leonard Bast from the very beginning understand the terms of English society, Margaret comes to fathom it as the novel progresses and agrees with Henry's remarks regarding the rich and the poor: "You do admit that, if wealth was divided up equally, in a few years there would be rich and poor again just the same. The hard-working man would come to the top, the wastrel sink to the bottom" (160). However, Helen is adamant on helping Leonard from poverty and refuses to see any obstacles. In short, Forster comes across as a moral realist. Robert Post describes moral realism as "predicated upon specific and demonstrable assumptions about the nature of the world, about the way in which individuals, society, or the natural universe must exist in order for human meaning to be possible" (369). Helen is ignorant of her own dependence on money and her disbelief that the Wilcoxes are the ones with financial stability, whereas Leonard needs to struggle. Furthermore, Helen refuses to accept Leonard's financial struggles and in extension she does not see England as whole. She focuses on small fragments in society and rejects values and features that do not support her world view.

In other words, Forster enhances the liberal dilemma by depicting the struggles between liberals. Helen and Margaret are both liberal in their ideals, Helen more so than Margaret and their world views and ideas clash early on. What I would like to emphasise in this section is the relationship between the sisters and the clashing of liberal ideals. There is an obvious parallel with the struggles within the Schlegel family and the prevailing liberal crisis. Critics have argued that liberalism is complex and has paradoxical ideals and ideas. For example, Widdowson explains the liberal crisis in terms of cultural alienation, just as Forster enhances the liberal crisis through the characters' struggles to understand liberal attitudes (18). Margaret criticises Helen for not seeing outside her liberal mind and Helen dismisses Margaret by accusing her of abandoning her beliefs. Helen is the best suited to understand the liberal crisis in twentieth-century England, since Forster emphasises the

liberal paradox through the actions and ideals of Helen that are very narrow. Helen is desperate to help Leonard and dreams of a cross-cultural society where everyone has the same opportunities and money is inconsequential. Helen renounces the Wilcoxes and their lifestyle and values and she desperately tries to fix Leonard's financial situation.

The ultimate liberal, the art-for-art's sake character Tibby Schlegel is clearly contrasted to Helen. As Helen is desperate to make a change, Tibby is indifferent and believes in letting things be as they are:

> When a young man is untroubled by passions and sincerely indifferent to public opinion, his outlook is necessarily limited. Tibby neither wished to strengthen the position of the rich nor to improve that of the poor … Though selfish, he was never cruel; though affected in manner, he never posed. Like Margaret, he disdained the heroic equipment, and it was only after many visits that men discovered Schlegel to possess a character and a brain. (247)

Forster attempts to compare Tibby's indifference to societal issues as the wrong end of the liberal tradition. Tibby has no interest in changing society or understanding the issues within his own class. His only concern is to preserve art and enjoying the aesthetic culture of London city life. Forster explains that while Tibby seems standoffish and childish, he is literate and understands society more than he seems to. This is seen in his discussion with Helen regarding Leonard, where Tibby notices that Leonard is not looking to be saved, whereas Helen sees Leonard as a charity case. Still, Tibby's disregard for others and society indicates that he cannot be the solution to the liberal dilemma. Rather, he is the character through whom Forster shows that the liberals cannot amalgamate the English middle class.

In conclusion, the liberal dilemma represents the internal struggle of the middle classes. Forster shows how the liberals are the in-between, but he explains that the conflicting views and values within the liberal tradition hinder them from being the solution to the struggling middle class. Thus, Forster establishes an intermediary who can understand individual values and see the larger social problem. That intermediary is the moral realist who does not reject values and ideals that do not suit them, but rather attempts at finding a middle ground. The strongest justifications for connecting the middle class comes from Margaret and ultimately from Forster himself, since it is through her that he attempts at responding to the condition of England at the time: "To be humble and kind, to go straight ahead, to love people rather than pity them, to remember the submerged – well, one can't do

all these things at once, worse luck, because they're so contradictory. It's then that proportion comes in – to live by proportion" (83). Margaret climbs up the social ladder by marrying Henry and Helen climbs down by giving birth to Leonard's child. In fact, Lionel Trilling suggests that these class discrepancies or clashes determine the Schlegels' "function as intellectuals" in the novel (122). Thus, the intellectuals are the intermediaries between the wealthy and the poor.

Trilling argues that the intellectuals think beyond themselves and "they must desire the good not only for themselves, but for all" (123). Margaret tries to make Henry Wilcox see beyond his own conventions, but he refuses to accept her ideas: "'My motto is Concentrate. I've no intention of frittering away my strength on that sort of thing.' 'It isn't frittering away the strength,' she protested. 'It's enlarging the space in which you may be strong.' He answered: 'You're a clever little woman, but my motto's Concentrate'" (188-189). Margaret accepts Henry's values, without sacrificing her own and thus proves her position as an intermediary and realist. She does not challenge him too much but realises that she can make him slowly see her point of view without denying the ideals that shape him.

3.5. Concluding remarks

Forster applies the modernist literary techniques of symbolism, personal struggles, comparisons, contrasts and imagery in order to depict the imbalance of the English class superstructure. He focuses on the liberal tradition so as to compare old and new values, only to explain that the liberals fail to grasp the larger social structure that defines the English society. He experiments with the portrayals and trials and errors of the actions of Helen and Tibby to establish that the liberals are in conflict with each other. Thus, he substantiates the liberal crisis that reached its peak at the turn of the century in Europe.

Forster uses art and culture to probe how the characters interact with each other. Leonard, who is culturally educated but does not see its aesthetic and artistic value, tries to connect with the upper middle classes through literature and art. As Margaret observes, culture destroys him, since he does not understand it as liberals do. Music plays a large part in Forster's writing and he included a pivotal scene that centres around Beethoven's fifth symphony where esoteric meanings and allusions to ancient mythologies are presented.

Property and inheritance are major themes in the novel and Forster depicts these as the ultimate condition of England. When the Schlegels lose their flat in London, Margaret

realises its sentimental and traditional value that it ought to be inherited within the family. The Wilcoxes, who are obsessed with power and property, initially refuse to give Margaret Howards End and Leonard has no hope of inheriting anything due to his low-class status. Property is a means of power, and London represents the core of the industrialists which threatens the rural country of England that still is loved by the romantics. In his descriptions of the opposing views of the city, country and property, Forster constructs a dilemma that extends to the condition of England and the English way of life that is undergoing changes.

Through imagery, Forster describes the turbulent and uncertain future of England and its people. Thus, Forster parallels the future of England with the future of Howards End. Throughout the novel, Forster attempts to provide different outcomes for the future of England. Margaret hypothesises what England might look like without the Wilcoxes and she recognises the single-mindedness of her own liberal tradition, while also noticing that the disparities and distinctions between each family exist for a reason. It is in these contrasts and differences that the future of England resides. Thus, Forster establishes the fate of England in ultimately blurring the future of the middle class by giving Howards End to the classless child of Helen and Leonard.

The liberals have no future unless they can find a solution to their paradoxical values and the Schlegel siblings represent the conflict within the liberal tradition. Tibby and Helen are often juxtaposed with each other even though both claim to be liberal. Margaret tries unsuccessfully to expose these conflicts to her siblings and she realises the faults in her own values and ideals. In order to find a centre that does not reject values and ideas, Forster turns to moral realism. Again, Margaret becomes the intermediary of Forster's examination of the moral realist: she is open to redefine her own world view, but in exchange she slowly attempts to make Henry see the larger social spectrum where ideals and values can be shared and reconsidered.

4. Conclusion: The fate of England and the amalgamation of the middle class

> Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its heights. Live in fragments no longer. (188)

Forster's main theme is to explain the condition of England and its people in the early twentieth century through the struggles and interactions of the three families. Through symbolism, imagery and in his literary style Forster questions and challenges the existing values and ideals in his society and within the middle class. Also, Forster provides with a solution through Margaret as the intermediary for the three families and the values they uphold. Margaret and Forster attempt to connect society and its people, rather than change them and their values.

Forster's upbringing during the Victorian era left its imprint on Forster, but through social progressivism he was able to see and reconsider the English class superstructure. Forster questions and criticises the hierarchical system and does so through the portrayal of the three families within the middle class. Schwarz claims that this is characteristic of the modern British novel, where Victorian literary styles are used to define characters in terms of their communities within a novel, while the modern literary style alienates the characters within their respective communities (136). Thus, Forster represents the literary style that falls in between these two: he uses both old and new literary techniques to enhance the struggles of adapting to the new century. Through these literary styles, Forster is at an advantage to portray the Victorian novel but take a modernist approach to challenge existing ideals and values that characterise the English middle class.

A more exact example of this merging of two traditions can be seen in the ending and in Forster's portrayal of the marriage between Margaret Schlegel and Henry Wilcox. Medalie argues that in Victorian literary tradition marriage represents the end, whereas in modernist tradition marriage is only the beginning (75). At first, Forster depicts (through the voice of Helen) that the marriage is the end of Margaret and implies that Margaret sacrifices her true values for Henry. However, in the latter part of the novel Margaret attempts to find a balance in living with Henry, who values the conventional and logical, without rejecting her own values and ideals. Margaret's efforts at uniting classes are doomed to fail, despite her

understanding of the Wilcoxes. The failure lies in the Wilcoxes' unwillingness to connect and instead to "[c]oncentrate" on their own class (188).

Selina Todd's framework for class structures in twentieth-century Britain shows how class distinctions help society and people understand the distribution of power and its inherent inequality. The English class structure remains unchanged, but Forster portrays the vulnerabilities of the century, when ideals and values are in constant turmoil and conditions change. As Kenneth Womack explains, Forster's depiction of the relationships and encounters between the traditional imperialists, liberal intellectuals and the lowly aesthete contribute to his interest "in reforming the very heart of England's social conscience" (258). This deep-rooted class superstructure and struggle is depicted in the consequences of Helen's meddling in Leonard's affairs. Todd argues that Leonard's fate is inevitable: "If the history of class in twentieth-century Britain teaches us anything, it is that individualistic efforts to attain material success and repute bring very limited gains to very few people" (508). Even though Leonard tries to educate himself in culture and art, he is still a kind of bastard in society and his attempt to climb up in the social hierarchical system is futile. Forster depicts this through Leonard's initial hopefulness but contrasts this with his failure. Both the conventional Wilcoxes and the opportunist Bast realise that the social superstructure is too deep-rooted in society for a few people to even make a small change. Furthermore, Helen Schlegel and Henry Wilcox as well as the Schlegels' aunt and Charles clash in terms of values and ideas. However, Ruth Wilcox and Margaret find a spiritual kinship and understand and share the values of the old, but also accept the dominating new values. These encounters are crucial in order to understand the clashing within the middle class as depicting the struggling society in England.

Through various relationships and encounters Forster explores the tensions between the personal moralities and values of the different classes. Tensions between families show the gap between values and ideals, and the strongest opposites are found in Charles Wilcox as materialistic and Tibby Schlegel who is prone to excessive aestheticism and indolence. Forster uses irony and ridicules both the extremes in order to enhance the obvious contrasts between them. In true modernist fashion, Forster attempts to find a solution for the clashing of these values and ideals. As Forster did with Henry Wilcox and Leonard Bast, there is a feature connecting the two young men: Charles and Tibby both fail to accept or be interested in matters beyond their own classes. This strengthens Forster's critique of both traditions and

he presents the solution through his moral realism that falls somewhere between the two traditions.

Michael Levenson claims that Forster was "[l]ooking at the world from the standpoint of historical necessity and the standpoint of visionary possibility, he saw depth in modern experience but also incongruity" and Howards End is a fitting example of representing those two enmities in modern literary tradition (78). *Howards End* uses both implicit and more obvious fictional features to highlight the struggles of the three families. Forster, who was born between two traditions, considers different aspects of social conditions (but within the borders of the English middle class) and uses symbolism and imagery to enhance and contrast values and ideals. As Levenson explains, liberalism and symbolism "become more unwieldy when brought together" and Forster uses it to his advantage to enhance and contrast the struggling values and ideas within the English middle-class (78). Forster repeatedly applies images of the sea and water to symbolise the changing tides and times in society where everything is uncertain and challenged.

Furthermore, Forster critiques the liberal tradition in his portrayal of Helen and Tibby. Forster explains the hypocrisy of the liberal tradition through Helen's failure to connect with other people and in her paradoxical values. Helen represents a typical example of the liberal dilemma: the liberal Helen does not see the class superstructure as definite and fails to understand the modern world. Both Henry and Leonard view Leonard's failed business endeavour as a failure from the start due to his lower-class status, even if Helen does not accept class as the cause. Therefore, an argument can be made that the liberal mind is not the intermediary for balancing power and understanding society as a whole. In fact, it is the realist in Margaret who successfully realises the misfortunes of Leonard and the necessity of the Wilcoxes. The liberal mind is too concerned with liberation of class distinctions, whereas the realist sees the world's inherent social system as too ingrained in society and thus cannot be changed.

Forster uses Howards End as the pillar of old values and questions its survival with the looming threat of London city life. The Wilcoxes, Schlegels and Basts are all going through struggles of their own in the changing English society. Through the Wilcoxes, Forster shows the struggle of the upper-middle class where hereditary and power and property are questioned and criticised. The Schlegels, on the other hand, try to balance money and property with their liberal ideals and values and the Basts see an opportunity in the crumbling walls of social hierarchy and attempt to rise from their impoverished lifestyle.

Forster's narrative shows a glimpse into all the characters' sentiments, values and ideals, while utilising the omniscient narrator and the other characters in the novel to challenge and castigate various beliefs. Trilling proposes that by using both a sympathetic and judgemental voice for the characters, Forster contrasts the good and the bad (11-12). Thus, liberalism is the intermediary of these clashing cultures, but also a central theme that is challenged and questioned.

Only connecting people and cultures extend beyond *Howards End.* Throughout his career Forster wrote about the same theme with different perspectives and characters. Henry Wilcox needs the liberal civilising force and the Schlegels need his economic and political power. Thus, the liberal tradition can live on by finding a middle ground and connecting the new and the old England. In the end, Helen comes to accept Henry and gives credit to Margaret for bringing peace among the two families. Finally, Howards End is given to Margaret, who vows to give Howards End to Helen's child, and thus the connecting of the middle class is the temporary solution for England. I write temporary, because Forster does not suggest that this is the definite or final answer. He uses imagery of water and waves that crash against the island to highlight the uncertain times. The house and the tree are left standing and symbolise the salvation of England. With the war looming ahead, it is evident that the fate of England is uncertain. Henry Wilcox's marriage to Margaret helped Henry see beyond his own values, and he slowly accepts that things might change, but it does not mean that England's traditional values are entirely discarded.

Thus, the fate of Howards End becomes the symbol for the survival of England. Howards End represents both the past and future of England: "All the signs are against it now, but I can't help hoping, and very early in the morning in the garden I feel that our house is the future as well as the past" (329). Ruth Wilcox left her mark in Howards End and Margaret continues to stand for the hope of preserving old values but also to amalgamate old values with new values and ideals. At Howards End, the conventional Henry Wilcox, the liberal Helen, the realist Margaret and the classless child of Leonard and Helen can live together, connect and finally understand and respect each other. At the very end of the novel Margaret offers the final sign of hope for England: "In these English farms, if anywhere, one might see life steadily and see it whole, group in one vision its transitoriness and its eternal youth, connect – connect without bitterness until all men are brothers" (264).

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